This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

UC-NRLF
$B 274 641

The WORLD of SUCKERS

LIONEL JOSAPHARE

Digitized by Google

LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA.

Class

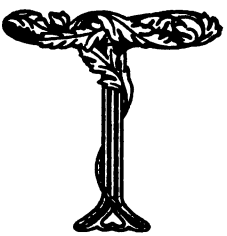
Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

The World of Suckers

Digitized by Google



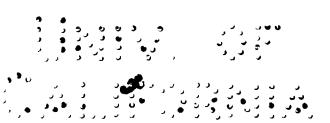
Digitized by Google

THE WORLD OF SUCKERS

by

LIONEL JOSAPHARE

Author of "The Man Who Wanted a Bungalow.")



THE DANNER PUBLISHING CO.
1508 POLK ST., SAN FRANCISCO
1909

Digitized by Google

Copyright 1909 by
LIONEL JOSAPHARE

Digitized by Google

Preface

Men judge their acts by a standard of good and evil. Yet the steam of their emotions is not consciously a product of either. Virtue is a mood which man has reduced to writing; it is a logical mood, caused by a tranquility of the mind and body. In action man is impelled by the force of his nature, and such force is singular, or selfish, not logical nor pervaded with his faculty of justice.

Some readers will not understand this book, because it does not deal with right and wrong. If the reader will take a retrospect of all philosophy, both religious and scientific, he will notice one theory that mankind is good and evil, and another theory that mankind is a mass of energy. This is as much as to say that men are going towards Heaven and Hell, from one standpoint; from another, that they may, as wilful creatures, disregard both. Men do disregard both, while pretending to fear them. Otherwise he could not succeed in the uproarious prosperity of this age. Herein I am concerned with what man does, not what he thinks he does nor what he piously ought to do.

Today the world has not the same appearance that it had in the first century A. D. The ideals are the ideals that were promulgated then, but the magnificent structures of civilization are the elaboration of something else. The First Century did not give us working directions for the Twentieth. Something unexpressed was in man that he did what he has done. In fact, most of the important events in history were accomplished in rupture of ideal action.

What has actuated man, I need not say. I watch the pageant of external things, called Progress. And that is my standpoint herein. Others may solve the

222472

Digitized by Google

inspiration of Progress. I take it as a well-known habit of the powerful race to which we belong. I insist upon it as the standpoint of practical philosophy, not for its merit but because of its presence. The world, from once upon a time until now, has progressed. The spirit of Progress has given us the world as it is. I do not moralize here on what should, would, could, must, or might be in a world of different principles which anybody else may have in view.

Philosophers, critics and public men write for the purpose of establishing something or undoing it. Each tries to read the prescription upon which this world was carefully compounded. With them it is either belief or analysis. Thereunto, some people look upon the killing of a human being as evil; some, as symbolic of our human constitution. I look upon it as a factor which Progress has used whenever occasion demanded. You cannot reconcile a battle-field with religion. You cannot explain why a protoplasmic man should slaughter others for God's sake. But you are sure that, in setting up his civilizations, man has made use of war. Prophets have seen things and exhorted people against letting the vision go to waste. Philosophers, in their own way, have scanned the celestial fireworks of the soul. Scientists have smitten the fiery horse-shoe of the unknown and lugubriously watched it cool to the same old iron.

The trouble with all these men is that they did too much thinking; not that thought is an illicit pastime when a body is feeling lonesome, but it seems to me that meditation gives man a false opinion of himself —false because action, though preceded and followed by thought, is not related to it. The human race is fond of the prehistoric and the ultrahistoric, to know what it has been and what it might become. And it has always interpreted its conduct by a belief in these

Digitized by Google

two unknowns. So there are many that look upon life as a drama whose last act is technically built on the first. Their idea of creation is melodramatic; which is no imputation of error. Therefore, people customarily desire a book that will "work out" according to some rule or thesis or moral. The principle of this book is, as was said, Progress. In this, I am judging man by his accomplishments, not by his statement of the case. His nature shows in what he does, not in that which he, in his hours of rest, fabricates for himself. If you do not admire such Progress as we have, you may say, "It is wrong; I will not progress with the others."

We have been told that human nature is unchangeable; yet no one has gone into particulars and related them to the ever-changing panorama of human achievement. Progress is a word frequently heard nowadays. Formerly one had but to flourish this magic weapon to paralyze all opposition. Subsequently the opposition learned the trick itself. Capital and labor both term their encroachments Progress; so that the term is now flashed back and forth. One has merely to be sure that he is progressive, and then at least he can claim to be traveling along an ancient and honorable road.

Progress is an improved system adapted to an increased number, giving the minority an easier control of the majority and the places which the majority inhabit. Some of its rotundas are open to everybody; some are so costly as to be for a few. The more picturesque the outside the more are they that are excluded from within. Altogether Progress beautifies, heightens and complicates our possessions, with a rapidity against which only a cynic would protest. He would be a sordid soul indeed who would not

Digitized by Google

spare a few moments to marvel over wireless telegraphy, even though he could not afford to use it.

Again, Progress improves the mind, and necessarily causes some mental retrogression. Today many of our works are so complex that few men understand them. Perhaps no one understands all. The majority of people have come to take most things for granted, and do not examine the wonders of daily use. The mentality becomes casual and incurious. Thus people use the incandescent light with no more concern than formerly they lit a tallow candle; and a gas-burning stove, as inconsequentially as once they kindled the logs. It might be said that their minds are now even less alert to the action, as the later facilities in operation require less thought. Devoting less thought to a more intricate apparatus does not improve the mind. The uneducated person now sees less than he ever did. The ordinary man moves in a world of keys and switches, buttons and wheels, pipes and wires that have sudden brilliant effects; and that is all he knows about it. His mind becomes a series of automatic impulses; reason is neglected.

It must be noted that the more effective is an invention, the fewer are they that can afford its use. Therefore, in the course of time, these few will become the very demons of ingenuity and power. Their powers will increase and their numbers lessen continually. They will eventually be in absolute control, as so many supernatural beings, genii with dominion over all.

There could be no objection to such a condition, if one is looking for instruction and amusement. Anybody who would assist Progress toward such a climax, without remuneration, nay, with the toil of his whole heart and body, must be a valuable citizen. And he is none the less valuable because he has been

Digitized by Google

lured to his task. His motive, whether sentiment or avarice or cowardice, does not affect his utility. Of course, he enjoys himself apart from the particular project in which he is a sucker. Progress extorts a small part of his individuality from him.

This book deals with Progress and the sentiment that goes with it, in public and in private life. It shows that even the lover with his mistress has not the simple heroism of old in attempting her emotions. Her pleasures fit into the scheme of Progress, toward which the lover must contribute. Slowly, at first, this book, in presenting the conventions of the day, will at length be considered the most conventional book ever written. It is a veracious account of the ordinnary man.

We can imagine what science will do; we know what will become of the degenerate. We cannot tell what the ordinary man will do in time to come. The ordinary man does not know what he is doing now. If John Smith is informed that he is descended from an anthropoid ape, and is also told that he can become an angel, John Smith may take such an interest in the angel and the ape that he does not observe what use the world is making of him in these days. Poor John, he is the legitimate subject of every man with a philosophic thumb or a grand theory; and yet as he has come up through the ages, he is, as we have read of him and know him, the same grinning little Johnny.

As men are, in a sense, all brothers, if we accept Nature as our mother, we are all johnsmiths, with different names for practical purposes. Some one, casting aside the circumstantial evidence of the past and the supernatural sight of the future, waiving all censure and flattery, should divulge this human being as he is.

Digitized by Google

Now I do not say that there are no exceptions to what I have to set forth; but I do say that the exceptional case is what has been magnified as the main action. Thus I give new meaning to the proverb that the exception proves the rule. The exception will prove TO BE the rule. The ordinary man is misled by his greed and sentiment, and does not know what he is about. In his public life and most of his private life, he is merely a cheated customer of Progress and a disappointed customer of every sentiment.

The reader is requested to understand that the writer is not involved with any spirit of criticism. Accustomed as the reader is to literature that is either an attack or a vindication, cynicism or enthusiasm, the blood-red face of the agitator or the pallid excuses of wealth, he will be perplexed at first by the simple observations of these chapters. When he has endured viewing each institution of life from the standpoint of Progress, he will see that sentiment for anything else is a fiction and a pretext. When his services are wanted, he is met with sentiment; to obtain sentiment, he must hoist the flag of gold.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Index

	Page
Definition of the Word	1
Absolute Necessity for Suckers	3
Remarks on the Growth of Suckerism	6
The Biped with the Coin	8
The Sucker Who Wants To Get Rich Quickly	12
The Voter	19
The Man Who Wants To Go to Heaven	27
The New Thought Sucker	34
The Soldier	39
The Lover	42
The Girl With the Demon Lover	50
The Sucker in Search of Happiness	57
The Optimist and the Pessimist	58
The Sucker Who Fears Public Opinion	61
The Sucker Who Tells the Truth	68
The Sucker Who Takes Advice on a Certan Important Question	71
Reformers and Their Followers	77
The Greatest Sucker of All	85
Something for the Future	87
The Idealist and Reader of Fiction	90
The Astonished Sucker	96
A Sucker to Whom We Owe a Great Responsibility	99
An Ordinary Day in the Life of a Sucker	102
The Sucker's Holiday	108

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

THE WORLD OF SUCKERS

Definition of the Word

It has been suggested that the word "sucker" arose from the name of a sweet and unsophisticated fish that skips through the waters of the Great Lakes and inflowing streams. Its aptitude for the hook was first the delight and then the ridicule of its captors, who were, perhaps like many good folks, looking for something at once delightful and ridiculous.

The pedigree of words is as unreliable as that of men. Most men like to say they come of good family; good families indulge in a genealogy from lords and ladies; the latter relate themselves to kings; and it is not unheard of for kings to claim descent from gods. There is too much formality in this. Words and men should be judged by their faces, not by searching the records. Few of us have fished in the Great Lakes, anyway, and so could not appreciate such derivation; but we do appreciate a sucker.

"Sucker," then, on the face of it, means one who sucks—obviously at an idea. Ideas are the milk of the mind, the nourishment of the soul, the food of national greatness. And even as a cow, or any female animal, unless soft hands or mouths take the milk, would corrupt its product, so would great ideas drivel over and dry without suckers.

Those who fished in the Great Lakes for the etymology of the word argued that prior to the discovery of the New World, there were no suckers in the social system. True, some were here and there, under

Digitized by Google

other names; but there were no traits of identification running through the various groups of suckerism. A thing is not fully known until it is named. It is not popular until it is named in slang. There were no suckers until the word "sucker" appropriately appeared. The classical terms of "dupe" and "laughing-stock" attest the regard that was paid to the unimproved sucker of ancient times. Still, the laughing-stock, while having some of the characteristics of our subject herein, was not a true sucker. He did not possess the commanding presence nor the theories nor the spirit of self-sacrifice that we require of suckers nowadays. And there is another point: the fact that he was laughed at shows him spurious. For we shall maintain and prove that the sucker of today is never ridiculed; on the contrary, he is praised, coaxed, fondled and maltreated. He is the majority of civilization. He has been called the blood and backbone of Progress; and looks it, after the horses and wheels of prosperity have passed over him. The sucker, always belonging to a powerful class, and being ruled by the weak, is feared; the laughing-stock was not.

Thus, we are informed that the Romans laughed at the barbarians that were being dragged through the streets, while, as a serious matter, they needed the barbarians' town lots and money in order to conduct that piece of high finance known as Immortal Rome. There was, it must be admitted, something akin to suckerdom in the victims; yet the student will mark that the most important element was lacking: that is: the consent of the barbarians. They were captives, while suckers are kind enough to follow the chariots of their own will. They are captivated by ideas, not captured with force.

Hence, our investigations will take us into the ques-

Digitized by Google

tion of what are those ideas that cause the world, all and singular, each and every one in his proper place, to suck as aforesaid.

These ideas may be divided into two classes; to wit: first, in which the sucker takes in his mouth the nipple of some noble sentiment whereby somebody else openly profits; and second, where the sucker's greed allows the somebody else to profit dishonestly. The result in both cases, as may be surmised, is utter frustration, downfall and curses, followed by nausea, convalescence, recovery, and resumption of the sucking.

And the beauty of this is that everybody is a sucker in one sense or another, and nobody is inflicted with the worst of it. Some get their reward in money, some in honor, some in wisdom, some in nobler inspirations—and each is altogether free to choose his own milk-bottle. Oft, indeed, this bottle contains just what was expected; sometimes what is disappointing; and sometimes there is not even a nipple behind the bottle, the sucker merely having had a ninny put between his lips; which was a compliment to his imagination.

Absolute Necessity for Suckers

In order that civilization progress and partake of poetic grandeur continuously or now and then, there must be, ready and willing at all times, a predominance of joyful and high-spirited fools. These supply the hurrah and sentiment, money and labor: Make no mistake; these are not fools of the brain, but fools

Digitized by Google

of the world. In themselves they are good, law-abiding, tax-paying, intelligent men; virtuous or avaricious, as they are wanted. Their other traits will be exposed later.

Here is a simple and harmless, even edifying, instance of the sucker's many uses. A hero, or a high official, or a foreign dignitary is expected on a visit to a large city. A few talkative citizens will greet him and ask him to predict a wonderful future for their city, or their climate, or their life insurance companies, their women or their presidential candidate. They wish to do this at a banquet that will burst the bladder of good cheer. How do they proceed? Meet and pool the expenses? No indeed. They mobilize themselves into a committee and inform the newspapers that accomodations will hardly be had for those who would like to attend. Then they send out invitations to a select few, that are to enter free, and to about 500 suckers, who are to respond with $20 each for the honor of the dinner; and until the date thereof, the suckers go about with an R. S. V. P. smile that is unmistakable.

Here is $10,000 in the hands of the committee; and their first act is to draw on said amount their expenses for a prior dinner, at which they test the vintages of the coming testimonial, debate the arrangements, pound the table with their fistfuls of opinion, calculate the cost of the entertainment, hire a flock of musicians, set aside appropriations for the florist and the hotel-man, and see that none of the surplus falls through a crack in the floor.

One concession is made to the vanity of the suckers, and that is recording the entertainment with a flashlight picture. Of course, the camera is focussed at the committee and the guest of honor. At each side of their perfect composure, the picture will show

Digitized by Google

about two hundred faces lopsided in one direction and two hundred sloped in the other, the points of facial interest in dignity, statesmanship, philanthropy, pride, satisfaction and modesty being equally lopsided and misfocussed right and left.

At the Flashlight Dinner, the suckers will get about $7 worth of food and wine for their twenty-dollar piece, and are placed where they must strain and contort every little while to observe how the guest of honor is getting along.

The particular brand of milk used to tempt these suckers is Society. On the next day, they buy copies of the newspapers, which may contain a picture of the Flashlight Tables, and they write to the photographer for a photographic print.

There is naught distressing in this. If a few hundred men cocker up once in a while to pay for dining with aristocracy, why not? It should not cause an anarchist shoe-maker to belch garlic and sarcasm. To disdain these men as individuals would be narrow-mindedness; they are necessary as a mass, a sort of living scenery adding a wealth of animation around the confabs of the committee, the invited guests and the great visitor.

Without these suckers, what would become of our civic pride? What would the people of other cities blab if a metropolis could not muster five hundred of its metropolitans to metropolate each with $20? And this is but one of the many uses to which a sucker can be put.

Digitized by Google

Remarks on the Growth of Suckerism

We are led to believe that the vitality of ancient nations depended upon war. At the heart of every ruler was a desire to cut out the hearts of his enemies. This may have been wicked, yet it makes good reading now. It is the ambition of greatness to become historic, or, as we say nowadays, get into print. Unless it get into print, and is interesting besides, it dies—is lost with the mortality of its generation, or, to speak technically, sinks into oblivion, a place, by the way, that is full of good people; and a number of well-meaning others might advisedly go there.

When governments rested from war, the descendants of heroes formed themselves into an aristocracy. They were having a good time when the church pushed its way to the front, being dressed up for the occasion with money it had collected in the rear. When men were not fighting or praying, they enjoyed the riches they had fought and prayed for. The church and the state proceeded to collect money as fast as they could with good conscience and good collectors. In the course of centuries a wonderful thing happened; or rather, it had been going on quietly for a long time before the wonder of it was noticed; some obscure creatures were making money faster than their betters were taxing it. There was no way of gouging the gold from the possessors, as they were already backed up with laws and principles for which innumerable poor suckers had fought and bled. Wars had become memories, and miracles forgotten. Moreover, there was a popular distrust of both. Peace had given rise to men who accumulated their wealth

Digitized by Google

on peaceful theories known as profits. They multiplied unmolested. As men no longer went to war for revenue, and miracles having become an investment of decreasing value, and treasures being bought and sold instead of being taken by force, the Biped with the Coin was found cockawhoop on the places of advantage. He stamped Liberty on his golden coins, and bought as relics the antique emblems of power.

So now we behold the world reorganized on a financial basis. Our population is so numerous we have conditions unknown to the classic states from which we have drawn our philosophy, religion, art and ideals. It is therefore with money and the purchasable things thereof that the moderner exhibits his claims to distinction. Yet the old, classic ideals are still with us, and the mixture of the old and the new continuously holds forth to make men suckers in one way or another.

To utilize these suckers, one has merely to promise something or ask something. This is too simple for understanding. Let us amplify. The idea is to promise a large and not necessarily performable result for a moderate payment; this works upon evil and greed. Or, one may demand, in behalf of some worthy cause, gifts or any assistance, and manage the proceeds to suit himself. With suckers all around him, he has a special consistency as large as the population of Greece or Rome at the time of their climax.

In this way, there has become, in our country, a number of inbeing governments, classes, creeds, clans, clubs, societies, companies, and the like, sometimes compact, sometimes extending over the states. Therefore, the innovator has merely to evolve some scheme, investment, land promotion, stock speculation, charity, boom, celebration, adventure, corporation—any

Digitized by Google

means of expending or expediting riches, and he has an immediate following. He takes the statistics of probable suckers with affinity for this or that, calculates on catching a certain percentage of them, and publishes his doctrine. If the avowed object of the undertaking does not burgeon with richness as promised, the suckers are nevertheless, during their hot enthusiasm, boiled out for the salaries and expenses of the promoters; in case of success, they are frozen out of the dividends. All these enterprises develop the resources, the energy and the virtue of the country, the wealth of the directors, and several other things, and could never be accomplished without suckers.

Every man is fumbling in all directions for money. Every man with money is compelled to do some amount of good. Every man has an ideal. From the three emotions, arise all the glories of society.

If there be any one who imagines that these lines are meant sarcastically, or as the expression of a political opinion, may the Devil take him. A number of matters other than politics are discussed herein, such as marriage, religion, philosophy, romance; and therein man proves to be as interesting a sucker as in public life. Some of the most distinguished suckers are called heroes, martyrs, pioneers, enthusiasts, and the like. Let us proceed with our subjects.

The Biped With the Coin

Everybody knows that a biped is a living creature with two feet. But not everybody knows how many corns the human biped has on each foot. The corn

Digitized by Google

is a pressure of that realistic circumstance termed civilization, and is frequently used metaphorically for discomfort; while warts are a gift from splendid Nature. So we may infer that fingers and toes, whether meddling with frog-pools or toddling through city streets, should neither point too proudly nor kick too vigorously at natural or artificial beauties. For the present it suffices to say that the biped with full pockets is civilization's masterpiece; the naked biped, without a cent in his hand, is merely a work of God.

Now, the two legs of the male biped must have been given him primarily for the purpose of wearing trousers, in which are two pockets especially adapted for the distribution of coin.

In all society, the most estimable biped is the father of the family, sometimes referred to as Paterfamilias.

When most characteristic and attentive to his duties, the Paterfamilias has very little brilliance and strut. He is not given much to laughter, as any display of geniality on his part will immediately be opportunitied by some one looking for a long-time loan. He criticises many customs of the folks and is allowed to apologize and do penance on a cash basis. When he cannot have his way, he goes to sleep. This gives him a moony rather than a sunny disposition; and, while he may be the head of a firm, he is the sorehead of the family. Occasionally some of the family allow Paterfamilias to accompany them to the theater, if he pays for the tickets.

On election days, Paterfamilias votes for men whom he has never seen, and who have no wish to see him. On election night, he shouts himself stiff in the neck while the precincts are being counted; then he returns home like a person that has witnessed a very sad and moral drama.

On Christmas, he is presented with some fancy

Digitized by Google

socks, fancy slippers and fancy sentiments, all of which he has needed for months. These gifts represent the dregs of the many dollars Paterfamilias has allowed his family for the holidays, and were bought just as the stores were closing up.

The Biped with the Coin arises in the morning when the rest of the family are perfuming their pillows with the breath of dreams. He arrives downtown on schedule time, for which he assumes high credit. Just what Paterfamilias does downtown, how he induces people to part with their money, and how he manages to insinuate himself into the good graces of business associates, is a mystery to his family. Yet there he is, every week, with the coin, handing it out like a conjurer to all the yearning giraffes at home, and fearful of tellin~ them that he has seen a tobacco that costs somewhat more than the old brand.

At the thrilling moment after dinner, the eldest daughter circumfluctuates herself about his chair, clears her larynx and gurgles into the subject of gowns. The younger powder-puff artist languishes with the blues until Artful Dad elicits the fact that last season's hat might disturb the Peace of God on the coming sabbath. The boys grapple their share; and the lady-wife puts in a resolution for the Pater's payment of another bill at his office instead of her defraying the same from her weekly stipend.

Throughout the month, Paterfamilias has no lack of manual exercise with the coin. Come pink and green tickets for benefit performances of pink and green ladies who sing, Louis XIV bouquets for brides and graduates, presents for departing friends, boxes of candy for hungry ones, donations to charity-bazaars, silver sprinkling for the church's velvet-lined basket, money for books, music, repairs, treats, and many other

Digitized by Google

oddities of importance to the general public and the improvement of the family.

To have beheld him in the days of his courtship—ambitious and vain, and even flattered (think of it, flattered) by those who knew him—one could hardly have foreseen that he would become nothing more than a Paterfamilias. And yet, perhaps at that time, he stepped on the wrong standpoint and was, as a lover too, a Biped with the Coin. He may have made love to avoirdupois and fancied he was getting something in troy weight. Not every youth looks or feels the part he is to fill in later life. And so the change from lover to Paterfamilias is one of those comicalities that Fate loves to paint when she sends valentines.

What strange things happen to standpoints! We imagine we are soaring through the clouds, until the sores on our feet remind us that we have been walking. Admiration makes mistakes and cruelty corrects them. A man will change until he does not seem fit to be his own brother. The same with many things. It may be that a pig, for a contrary example, looks to be the most appropriate animal that could be made into a sausage; and there is, about the sausage, an impalpable suggestion that it will or ought to be eaten by a German. On the other hand, behold a fair field of flax in the sunlight; who, uninformed, could predict that that unconcealed and quite mentionable verdure would go to make a woman's garment the very name of whose use or place might be a breach of good form? There is in man a certain youthful flax that disappears in obscure manhood.

The question remains, How has the proud youth grown into a middle-aged sucker that he lets his wife and daughters go hot-pressed and fragrant through the avenues while he toils in a deckel-edged collar

Digitized by Google

and sees pin-wheels whenever he wishes to spend on himself five dollars that will not give anybody else pleasure? How has society hypnotized this handsome unit of population into cowardly self-sacrifice? The easiest possible way. The world lauds generosity. Everybody that has a heart-felt or a stomach-felt want in presence of the Biped with the Coin talks generosity and the nobility thereof, and the compound generosity and nobility of other bipeds. Therefore, that he might not be called a stingy, gouty, crabbed, miserly, dry old piece of salt pork, the sucker gives away all his money. Notwithstanding, it is a matter of mystification with him, when he does think, that the world does not applaud all that it lauds.

Now, if the Biped with the Coin were not a sucker, how could his daughters embellish themselves with all those glittering things that are advertised in the newspapers? If she should not buy, the merchants could not afford to advertise, and the newspapers could not give us all the costly news, and we should be almost as ignorant as Aristotle and Socrates, who had no newspapers.

And that is but one utility of the Biped with the Coin. As he figures in many other scenes, let us proceed further.

The Sucker Who Wants To Get Rich Quickly

We must have men who want to be Bipeds with the Coin as soon as possible. Hazardous undertaking are to be encouraged in all matters; and money signifies all.

Digitized by Google

Money has a bad reputation. Should a man be judged by the money he keeps, he would not have many flatterers. Judged by the money he lavishes, the case is reversed. This improves the status of lucre immediately. It is not going too far to state that wealth has been slandered by persons unfamiliar with it. A million dollars is a pretty thing to look at; the pauper is the filthy looker. Still, money has its shortcomings.

Wealth, like unto every form of organic and inorganic life, is subject to disease. The pomegranate, the water-lily and the lady are subject to discrepancies from the facts which poets love. Beyond this, even abstract ideas have their defects and swellings. Meditation may have, so to speak, enlargement of the liver; reason, softening of the brain; love may develop a mania; morality, become eccentric; justice, become ossified, mercy, burst into tears; religion, bite the thunders in fanaticism; sorrow, drink itself to death; and charity may have to swim after the bread cast upon the waters. Likewise, money, the medium of exchange, circulating among all these evils, is liable to become infected with fraud. The methods that pulsate to a vast national wealth suffer from excess. Trade becomes irregular. Here and there business will do itself to a bad purpose. Opulence has fatty degeneration of the egotism. Speculation becomes delirious.

We have ever within view fortunes made by artful exploit. Nothing more logical than that the way is open to innovators and improvers.

A sudden and extemporaneous desire for wealth sometimes overtakes a community with all the fervor of a revival meeting. There seems to be a sort of Renaissance, an enthusiastic afflatus, as if the populace were conscience-stricken for wasted days, eager

Digitized by Google

to quit laborious livelihoods and become millionaires through an act of faith.

The cause is not hard to find. Upon a day, newspapers publish the advent of a large, friendly person, eating extravagant breakfasts and star-pointed with diamonds like the constellation of Orion. He has a happy, hobnobulous laughter that causes his club-fed paunch to heave on the bounding main of admiration. Every surface inch of him seems to carouse with success and good nature. And Talk! He can blow, tattle and blurt like all vaudeville. And every time he dynamites the atmosphere with a joke, the barkeeper jumps aboard and cries Hold-fast, so that nobody may fall off on the turn.

Somehow there transpires the idea that the man has come amongst us with glad tidings of wealth; he seems to be the angelic herald of something connected with money.

In the show-window of a notary public appear a pile of nuggets and a few bars of gold bullion. The exhibition is viewed by such multitudes that the air in the neighborhood becomes unsanitary. Men make witty remarks at the expense of the gold, without lessening its quantity, and tell what they would do with it were it some of theirs.

The man with the sizzling diamonds issues a statement. He has, up in the mountains, more gold than he can use. He needs money to get it. The stock of his company is listed on Exchange. The impression he gives is, Buy some of my shares and you will soon be able to garrul and bubble like me in proportion to the number of shares you buy. Of course, I have the controlling interest, and I'll control it for your benefit.

Then is heard the tale of a poor washerwoman, to whom the original owner gave 10,000 shares for wash-

Digitized by Google

ing his blue shirt and making him a sandwich when he was a prospector. Now she owns a hotel and automobiles and is opposed to the income tax, and the common people fear that she will corrupt the legislature. The 10,000 shares are in Licketysplit Consolidated.

On a direct line south of Licketysplit, is the Epileptic Dog Mine. This sounds as good as if the gold were known to have taken the same direction. Suddenly arrives a whiff of news that the Epileptic Dog is about to have a fit. Men buy it because Licketysplit is too high-priced. The Lousy Kate is next to Licketysplit, but she has not the mother lode; still, she is bought. The Wormy Cheese Extension, the Azure Ass, the Consolidated Blanche all take turns with the investors.

Some of these subterranean treasure vaults have no deeper openings than a mountain poet would make to search for Spanish doubloons or bury some of his own. Any one of them might have been incorporated by a faro-dealer and promoted by an ex-convict. These trifles do not bother the sucker. Only his imagination bothers him. Not to take advantage of the offers would be to lose all self-respect, to feel vapid, inane and jejune. He gets the fantods whenever his wife urges prudence. Before he makes up his mind, some one comes along with a hyperdermic syringe of information that starts more golden dreams and fevers with honey-dew. And the sucker empties his wallet and cools his brow in another direction of the compass. It is when he cannot buy every available rumor that he trembles in all his ball-and-socket joints lest he has missed the right one.

He buys all he can, and waits for prices to revise themselves upwards. Everything is ready. He is impatient for the band to play and the big trombone

Digitized by Google

blow a boom. Presently the prices go up a little. He gives a leap of satisfaction and stops with one leg in the air. The stocks, having leapt to their own satisfaction, fall again. Anon they rise, promisingly but not recklessly. Yet he does not dispose of his certificates, for he observes that the insiders are not selling a share. That the insiders are not selling is printed in all the newspapers; the sucker thinks he was the only one to notice it. Upon which, he learns that the man with the diamonds did not own Lickety-split, but was promoting it for a friend. However, some eastern capitalists are looking over the scene; and hope wings forth again like a chicken tamale in full flight.

The largest gold mine ever discovered is suckerdom. Suckers average more gold per ton and yield more consistently than any hill of ore. Besides, the same old machinery can be used to smelt them. The suckers do not buy an interest in the gold that is taken from the mine; they buy printed shares; they raise prices on one another to dispute the right to a small and inadequate dividend or no dividend at all. When millions of dollars-worth are taken from the mines, the suckers get little more than interest on their money. When the directors issue no dividends, the suckers still compete for the shares. The owners take the profit on the ore, and the suckers gain or lose on the market excitement.

And yet, the mining-stock sucker is more intelligent than the experimenter that sends $500 to a man far away who has a scheme for returning the $500 in six months with $1000 more. Contrary to expert opinion, this most interesting and characteristic form of suckerism will never die out. It has been in existence for centuries. It may have cessation, but will reappear in another form. The money will be sent. The

Digitized by Google

performer will have improved his act. The sucker, even as of yore, will not quite grasp the scheme between the ears. He knows that 500 per cent has been made and can be made again. He meditates more keenly about it when his savings for years is tinkling sweet and sad in the distance, like cowbells at twilight. The game has been operated on a plan for lending money on real estate and pooling for vast control of corporation stock. The action is businesslike and ordinary on its face. The man far away advertises himself as President of the National Loan, Credit and Fiduciary System, which has hit upon a new principle of finance, new and remarkable as anything in this remarkable and inventive age, yet so simple that one can but wonder how it escaped the minds of other great financiers. Goldseal certificates and voluminous encouragement are returned to the subscriber, who is vain over the numerals and signatures, and dreams of dividends walking in like geese at sunset. Now it must be remembered that while, in some cases, the signatures are of obscure men with no assets but an office in a large building, in other cases the signatures are of well known men led by a respected citizen who may some day be in the prisoner's dock. In the worst instance, not having heard from the President of the National Loan, Credit and Fiduciary System for some time, the sucker writes a letter. Next month, he writes another; again in two weeks; and, in an accumulation of fury the very next day, another strong as a naval salute. The latter ought to make the millionaire feel cheap as rag-bottle-sacks, if he has any manhood left in him. Yet the fiduciary president replies not nor wines, and all is mystery, until one day there appears a newspaper story to the effect that United States Secret Service Agents have found the fiduciary man in Florida, and

Digitized by Google

there is trouble with the extradition papers. He was a sucker himself, for he tarried too long at his post. He could not bear to leave while the checks, money orders and currency were brought in with every mail. The result was that he stayed to the last moment and spanked away only one train ahead of the detectives. Truly, he is the one to be pitied, for he is the only one to go to jail. Why not, may be asked.

Answer: Every man connected with a fake is a faker. This may sound harsh; nevertheless a swindler is mentally incapable of appealing to any but a dishonest mind. He is always a rapid, swivel-jointed fellow glowing with large, Marco Polo dreams for sudden sale; he cannot dawdle with men that are accustomed to pay what a thing is worth. The man who buys a stolen gold-brick for half what he considers its worth, is dishonest. He who bets on a horse race and curses his luck because the race was prearranged against him, was running ahead of his conscience. He who finances any questionable game is a rogue. He who buys stock in a ship that sails for sunken treasure is partner in a nefarious pursuit. There may seem nothing wrong in it; yet the captain will prove to be an irresponsible adventurer, a dreamer of contraband dreams; his owners are suckers. They have outfitted a tawdry tale, and not for the first time. The sucker who enters a gambling house, does so with the intention of winning from thieves. He who buys railroad stock or future wheat knows that his only hope of welfare lies in being on the side of the shrewdest and shiftiest manipulators.

It may have been noticed that the more stupendous a swindle, the higher is the class of its victims. The prime swindler victimizes even his aristocratic accomplices. When this arch-fiend of a fraud begins without a single resource other than his auroral prom-

Digitized by Google

ises, and escapes with a trophy of $100,000, his work is first-class and so are his suckers. They will include the unpaid landlords of his apartments and offices, the dealer who expected installments on sumptuous furniture, the lawyer who advanced money to become the legal representative and a partner, the solicitors who put up a cash bond, the typewriter who took her pay in kisses and candy. All the friends of the concern are left, with stock certificates, to mourn a sad-ending masterpiece of deception. It must be very fine melodrama when even the musicians weep.

However, all these affairs are the diseases of money. He who claims to have a remedy for them is an imposter.

The Voter

Voters are essential to the peace of a country, so that they may blame themselves, and not their rulers for mismanagement.

If the majority of voters were not suckers, they could not be trusted with the theoretical power of government. Should the majority make laws for the good of the majority, the nation would suffer, and national credit look like a second-hand vegetable store.

The politician is a merry devil. He shovels fire with the common people and gets into hot water with the rich. Jumping in and out of these two difficulties is the hardest work he does; yet he calls the workingman brother. At an inaugural ball, he wears his fashionables, and is jealous of his rank. Mingling with the voters, he leaves his diamonds home, and says, "Plain people such as you and I." When he dines with a Sugar King, he takes a lump of sugar;

Digitized by Google

when he eats with a farmer, he picks his teeth with straw.

At election time, he appears in the cities, a fat, fattening, bright-nosed angel of light, jerking the skies for liberty in behalf of people that are supposed to be sovereign and govern themselves.

It might be mentioned that a Republic is merely a nominal form of government. Most voters do not know what they want, and therefore cannot legislate. The man with an income knows that he does not desire an income tax. The man without an income does not know whether he desires it or not. As long as the incomeless man is not decided about it, the politician will prove that the tax is worthless. When there is a popular demand, the politician must speak to please the demanding majority. As soon as the law is passed, it is handled and interpreted by the class that were previously hostile to it.

Money is more powerful than votes, because money knows its own mind, and, in a large country, has means of interchange and communication which votes have not. Votes are too cumbrous to act unanimously. We are now in the Reign of Gold. We might call it the Golden Rule.

The politician is a poet. The poet does not betray his real life in verse. The official statements of his soul are ideal. Thus the politician. He is a dual personality with a lily in his hand and a tapeworm in his ambition. Half of his life is spent in explaining and concealing the other half.

When he goes down to meet the people, he prepares for their reception the most impractical, nonsensical, irrelevant and cheapest-looking place in the world. The salute of his unphrenological honesty is well related to the flimsy-flamsy decorations, which make the hall fitter-looking for a rag-pickers' mas-

Digitized by Google

querade than the solemn duties of statesmanship. Everything that looks like coarse reality is twined with bunting, stuck with paper shields, dabbed with rosettes, and mottoed with prosperity.

Amid this, the haranguer uses the language of the poet, the idealist, the lover. He goes into ankle-spraining furor, disbowels the opposition, and displaces the landscape in a rumpus of rhetoric. He promises, upon election, to jugulate the apparition that is over-shadowing his audience and threatening the fair land with warlike destruction. Call upon him in his official capacity, and you behold the real man. He does not mention liberty. He does not sloganize equal rights for all.

And still on the next demonstration, rainbow upon rainbow looms in the foam of his passion. He raves with popular wonders and palpitates impossibilities. Still has he the manner of the lover with his mistress. Ambition is his wife. Periodically he returns to the crowd, petting and flattering and honeysuckling it for favors.

The politician makes a fictitious appeal to the intellects of his audience. His one aim is to prevent the suckers from thinking. He gushes with the irrelevant waters of eloquence, rumbles with melodrama, and endeavors to make the suckers believe that this extravagance is in some way connected with what the butcher and baker will charge next year.

As good an example as can be had of political suckerism that was carefully nursed year after year, is the protective tariff. The protective tariff was perhaps the finest piece of statecraft ever foisted upon a few million suckers. It made them not only support the government but pay a subsidy to the factories as well. It not only swept national taxes from the earth to the kitchen and bedroom but allowed the factory

Digitized by Google

to tax the disinterested citizen. It centered all the pride and activities of the country upon commerce. It favored the industry at the cost of the industrious. Instead of taxing a livelihood, it laid usury on the necessaries of life. Instead of taxing worldly possessions, it made the human being pay a toll for walking through the gates of necessity. It taxes the man whose taxable property consisted of little more than his love of life. A tariff was imposed on the infant brought into the country from the port of motherhood; a percentage was levied on its infantile needs. The homeless laborer, emerged from the ditch, was taxed the moment he bought an undershirt. Instead of being taxed once a year, the sucker ransomed himself from commerce whenever he made a purchase.

He may be consoled with the statement that supporting the Land of Freedom by taxing the land of the free might be fair but unconstitutional. He is to believe that the constitution is a sacred thing, and any word against it the foul act of a man without a country. The constitution is the country; criticism of it, unpatriotic. And yet a glaring criticism of one part of this inspired document is another part, at this time known as the Fifteen Amendments.

The idea that it is difficult for a new country to pay a profit to its manufacturers was a magnificent one in the history of suckerism. It is one of those thoughts that from its very mystery convinces a sucker, who likes to be mystified, always.

When there were opportunities to vote on the measure, orators came and shouted, Rally round the flag, boys. They also brought a few statistics, with which they posed as the very fulness and hot springs of logic.

The method of making the suckers rally against themselves is something like this: at election times,

Digitized by Google

the speakers go into the pavilions and talk patriotism; patriotism having nothing to do with law. The speaker's platform is draped with red, white and blue; colors that do not corroborate his statistics. His band plays the national airs, and his quartet sings. Wherever there is incidental music there is fraud, and all the rest of the performance is music in disguise. The hall is hung with portraits of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln, framed with red-white-and-blue fly-paper. It is well for the speaker that the pictures cannot come to life. He says, Our party will give you great enterprises and at the same time make life easy for you. Our term of office will be a blessing unto the majority of you. And then, with lubricated gesture, he points to the Grand Old Flag, and bursts the shells of enthusiasm over the masses.

It must be a sorry mass of humanity that would not respond with cheers (which mean votes) to patriotism and the flag. Such a mass would be useless in peace and in war. It would not support industries nor meet an invasion of the enemy. Poor suckers, they wish to vote for themselves and the flag, and are not quite sure how this can be done simultaneously. Being generous, they give the benefit of the doubt to the star-spangled banner. What matters it that the flag has no relation to the issues of the campaign, except to shed its glory over the candidate who talks patriotism and wields power. The star-spangled banner is not mentioned frequently on the floors of Congress.

The main characteristic of the political sucker, as of others, is that he desires something for nothing. While we have the greatest nation that ever waved a flag on this terrestrial sphere, the basis of the politi-

Digitized by Google

cian's and the reformer's argument is the roistering idea that world supremacy can be had without cost and can return a premium to the wage-earners besides. The truth is that supremacy cannot exist without suckers. A nation without suckers, a nation such as the Socialists demand, would be the sucker of the world. It would be divided up as soon as the foreigners could come to an agreement over the division. It would have no army nor navy. It would be happy, if the other nations would let it alone, even as they let the American Indians alone.

After listening with erected wonder to the political showman, the sucker votes. During the next few years he forgets what happened and what did not happen. There are also some things that happened without his knowledge. Yet it is good, at election time, to be palavered and slavered with the sentiment that he is a sovereign making his own laws.

All the blessings of the universe, and in this country, rest with the Unknown. The Unknown of the universe is God; in a republic, it is called the Majority. No one ever knows what the Majority will do, nor does itself know. And it is because the Majority has no method of communing with itself that it must listen to the voice of the orator and then suck at his sentiment.

There must be, after all, some reflex sense of humor, some sweetbread of satisfaction in the abdomen of the sucker, exuding a joyful pancreatic juice over his abdominal efforts to reason. Such functional thing would account for his cordiality as it does for the laughter of the man that falls into a puddle.

He believes that he is a sovereign in a republic, aptly because it is not called an absolute monarchy, a form of government that never existed anywhere. There never was an absolute republic nor an absolute

Digitized by Google

despotism. The most despotic of rulers have done most to glorify their countries, sometimes externally, sometimes internally. And those of our presidents that were least sympathetic towards the Common People were most terrifying to the foreigner on the throne. It takes a prince to frighten a prince. The friend of the people is always bluffed abroad.

Republic? As if eighty-five million people could be a republic! New York City is a monarchy. The United States always has been an empire, and once waged a five-year war with a section of the country that thought otherwise. True, there is no right of succession, no princes of royal blood. But royal blood is not the worst thing in a kingdom. Nor is a political boss the best thing in a republic. A royal family is a costly aggregation. So is a Senate. And why should suckers have a Senate if the representatives represent the will of the people?

Another fluffy notion in the brain of suckers is that they can be safeguarded with laws. If they were not suckers they would not have to be safeguarded. A sturdy man would have naught to do with a miscreant corporation. He would withdraw his patronage, and the corporation would starve to death. Instead of that, the sucker pleads with his public officers to keep a few brainy men from defrauding him. Very little can be done, and this for a curious reason: the sucker has been flattered by the Declaration of Independence into believing that all men are free and equal. A corporation is a person and is also free and equal. All the sucker's constitutions forbid him from making a law that would not apply equally to the largest corporation and meanest beggar. So that laws of state are as intangible as the politicians who made them. And constitutions that are summits of liberty in one age do serve as ambushes and obstruc-

Digitized by Google

tions in another. This comes of being free and equal with a corporation. The Constitution of the United States was gotten up to defeat what was then the ordinary practices of royalty. It will not defeat the ordinary practices of money. Evil cannot be quashed for more than a little while. It has a thousand phases, each ready to spring up at unguarded places. The only advice is that every man remain on guard. Suckers will not do so.

The sucker believes in himself; he is credulous of his ability to select honest men. And yet, when an honest man gets into office, it is not because he is able to convince the people that he is honest but is able to sneak past the bosses while causing them to believe that he is not.

The sucker also believes that the man who opposes a scoundrel is, to be sure, altogether honorable. A scoundrel may be wrought to anger by the act of another scoundrel. History is full of men that began in purity and ended in the dregs. Even an honorable act is not proof of honor. If we are to judge by the way some of them vilified Washington, there were some rogues among the signers of the Declaration of Independence. If Abe Lincoln had lived in Washington's time, Abe might not have considered it advisable to emancipate; or we might have had a civil war with the Great Emancipator on one side, and the Father of his Country, a Virginia slave-owner, on the other.

The only reason why we have had no royal family in the United States is that George Washington refused to accept the crown. And the reason why George refused a third term was that he knew he would not get it. The people already complained with a tired feeling for an honest man.

Another trait of political suckers is that they are

Digitized by Google

afraid to hear themselves talk when the government disappoints them. Modestly they leave politics to the professional politicians. The people at large are timid about appearing in public. Ridiculously they listen to the cry of reformers. The suckers want a new system. Imagine inventing new rules in a card-game to prevent the opponent from cheating. The more rules there are, the easier is it to cheat a fool. No; we do not need a new system. We but need a way of recognizing honest men before they become tainted with cynicism.

As to revolutions, they are a disgrace and the surest sign of suckerdom. Riots are acts of weakness. It is a wretched community that must resort to bloodshed for what it cannot get by character. Think of ten men saying to one, You have treated us so miserably that we propose to kill you. A confession of abject and contemptible life on the part of ten.

The ordinary man thinks that by going to the polls, he is doing his duty as a citizen. But it is then too late. On election day he can merely do his duty as a sucker.

The Man Who Wants To Go to Heaven

It is extremely important that some of mankind go to Heaven; they improve the earthly paths as far as we can see them go.

Verily this world as it is known would be an unreliable place were it not made steadfast with the unknowable. This inspires man to the heights of heroism, to the profundities of hell, to the raptures of

Digitized by Google

martyrdom, and to the revels of imagination. Without our appetite for the unknowable, our coarser thoughts would not assimilate to any purpose. Religion tries us out, forces us away from sluggish mediocrity, and wafts us to that mysterious air where the last vestiges of reality are analyzed and dissipated and blown away, but not forgotten. For the games of the flesh are sweet, and man will not go to Heaven until he cannot go anywhere else.

Be that as it may, the fact is that many sagacious investors can be sold an estate which nobody has ever seen, whose whereabouts are not known, and upon which the buyers cannot enter until they are dead. Heaven and Hell are awesome places. It is a daring man that coins them into profit; he is a far-seeing promoter that can turn the Future into cash; he is a shrewd galoot that can sell tickets for an entertainment that is to take place on Doomsday.

At first sight, it would seem that the man who wants to go to Heaven must be a pessimist; he does not esteem this world as up to the standard of an Omnipotent's handiwork, and desires other evidence of divinity. On second thought, we sadly remember that we are mortal; and, it appears, that when the poison of the years will have shriveled our bodies and we are put into the coffin, it would be no more than right that the cargo be shipped to another place prepared for us. Everybody likes to be immortal. There are even those who say they would rather go to Hell and be damned than go nowhere and be nothing.

The general view is that the more we forego in this world, the more we will deserve in the next. This seems plausible, and would be a commonsense, business-like arrangement with Nature. It is quid pro quo, one thing for another, tit for tat. The wonder of it is that any man should be willing to pay for

Digitized by Google

such obvious information; and not only that but, having paid for it once, he should continue paying for it year after year.

It being entirely a matter of faith, the question is, What is that? Faith is prejudice rampant when all evidence is to the contrary. The prejudice (or desire) has been held to be evidence of a fulfillment coming. When all is said and done, this faith, this desire for immortality is the only light we have on the future. And the best reverence to it is joining with sacred voice in the anthem, Don't blow out the light.

As soon as man had the first pain, he began to think. He asked himself why he was created. He may have felt that he could not go on until he should know why. Fortunately there were at hand other men ready to answer the divine question in fine, poetical language. Most of them did not go into details. They were wise. The more they went into details, the less they were believed. Mankind will always have faith in its Maker. It will backslide at the name of an angel. Man has always longed for Heaven, been willing to acknowledge his sin, liquidate the damages in coin of the current standard, and pay all the costs of court, for redemption. A man may have hoaxed the sentiment of suckers, and developed their greed, and become rich thereby; yet a sight of the aristocratic charlatan himself, seated in a fashionable church, disgorging his gold on the same unsubstantial promises that he has used on others, is the true meeting of the sublime and the ridiculous. Heaven the unseen sublime, and earth the staring ridiculous.

It must be said that of recent years, religion has spared the rod and mankind has become a spoiled child. Gradually yet not imperceptibly, churchdom is letting go the tenets of the Middle Ages. Yet, if there is anything that orthodoxy cannot slur over, it is the

Digitized by Google

doctrine of Thou shalt not sin. Formerly the sacred powers took a decisive stand on this topic, and there was much authorized cursing over it. Nowadays attention is directed mainly towards securing a large church attendance. The successful church, not the successful creed, is fought for. The pulpit is prone to flatter the vanity of the pews rather than enforce the command of Thou shalt not.

The New Testament is a roof garden built upon the Old. If the Old is falling, the New must become a castle in the air, not to fall with it. Men have lost faith in the little discontented tribe that seemed to have a genius for religion and the slaughtering of an ox. The Biped with the Coin has captured politics and bought religion. He entertains kings and keeps priests in hire: The devout man in black is apt to assert, Believe or be damned; but he no longer dares to say, Obey or be damned. He would lose his situation. So the Biped with the Coin pats the preacher on the back, pats himself over the heart, and does not forget how to kick a sucker in the vertex. The Biped with the Coin assumes that Heaven is keeping pace with the age.

Eliminate money from the world, and what would become of religion? Preachers would be almost as scarce as saints. Yea; not only of religion but of other things, quite a few lovely branches would wither and disappear from the tree, if the root of all evil were cut out.

Religion is philosophy in the imperative mood. Philosophy is blunder thinking it over, finding the scientific name for a broken heart. And all our better thoughts are but an indecisive combat between the infinite and the infinitesimal.

Reverting to faith, there is a thriving suspicion that half the clergy are agnostics. The clergyman, like the

Digitized by Google

politician, when met in the streets, does not seem the same skylark that lured us to the empyrean a while before. He does not seem to have any more faith than is necessary to forget a sad tale or laugh at a joke.

Take the common case of an honest clergyman. He is, say, thirty-five years of age. He looks human; he is called a divine. He relishes good gravy as well as grace. He does not boast the mustardseed of a miracle. Thirty-six years ago, he was not much to mention. He did not flutter down from the pearly gates. As a physiological specimen, he was, at birth, nothing extraordinary nor astonishing. He brought with him no recollections of spaces beyond. And yet, in the thirty-fifth year of his age, he sprawls above a pulpit and explains the universe. He administers invective and solace in the proper place. He shouts creation and doom with equal facility.

Whatever may be the preacher's knowledge of divinity, whatever may be his influence in the next world, the listener has no way of satisfying himself. Flattered and exhorted, his soul goes to an assignation of beauty, miraculous windows, incense exalting and artful music. He is buying something he knows not what, nor if the seller be entitled to sell.

The peccadilloes of the church may cause the skeptic to deem religion the greatest graft that ever existed on earth. This would be a pestiferous state of mind should it become widespread; for it is of the greatest importance that there be among the people a number of men continually pleading in behalf of virtue.

The fact is that many a fault of the church is caused by the vicious tyranny of the congregations. They demand too much for too little effort on their part. Just as women require bombastic phrases from their

Digitized by Google

lovers, and voters from their politicians, so has the soul of the sinner demanded of the priest, fantasy, rapture and bliss. And these blessings must be foretold; though the priest specifies no time for the fulfillment of his promises, and does not hold himself accountable for anything that goes wrong on earth in the meantime.

The old pagans were such suckers that they would not heed a wise man's advise, nor take a medicine man's herbs, unless he could prove his wisdom by performing a miracle. The barbaric religions did not let off their priests lightly, but did hold them accountable for changes of the weather, success in war, afflictions and healings and events generally.

All present-day creeds are originated in miracle, yet the ministers thereof do not so exercise their hands now. Very sensibly do they refrain from meddling offhand with the supernatural. And because the priests do not pretend unearthly powers, there are millions of suckers who see no reason or motive for being good. There are also millions of suckers that would rather believe in a dream than in a plain, logical statement of honor. Dreams were once a powerful adjunct in divination. They will be again. Far from the religion of the future being founded on reason, it will, as others have done, take its beginning from the necromantic nocturn following a welsh rabbit. It will begin with terror and mystery, and end in salvation for cash. It will perform miracles, build cathedrals, and end on the streets with hallelujah and a nickel in my little tambourine. One spiritualistic medium, bolder and sweeter than the others, will do it.

But this is getting far from Paradise and far from the question. The vital point is that the poor, bewildered sucker, saturated with a thousand frauds on

Digitized by Google

earth, wants to go to Heaven. He wants to be happy not only during lifetime but after he is dead. He is desperate now and then and willing to support the professional blessers in luxury if they will help him to be saved.

Remember, this is the same sucker that wants to get rich quick, and that votes for a politician he has never seen, and enters many transactions that prove him to be a fool, a coward and a knave. The cause of all this organized prayer and general disturbance of the skies is that the sucker knows in his heart that he does not deserve to go to Heaven, according to the rules. He knows what the rules are. It is because he has broken them that he is periodically alarmed. And he pays the priest because he imagines the priest fitter to pray. The sinner is afraid to transact the whole business with Heaven. He craves the aid of a professional, as if he fears there might be some trick that he does not understand in the way. He is still a coward and a knave. He slips a few coins into the hand of the dominie and confuses religion with politics.

It is a matter of responsibility. If the sucker does not feel responsible for his own soul, there is no reason why some one else should not assume the task and be paid for it. What good it all does may be beheld upon arrival in Heaven. If the priest has done well, he should be congratulated. Should the meeting occur in Another Place, the disappointed spirit should not be hard on the reverend man but acknowledge itself for a sucker. Of course, if the meeting does not occur any place, nothing can be done.

Digitized by Google

The New Thought Sucker

There is considerable demand for persons that cannot distinguish between the abstract and concrete.

Men of the old religions pray to God and wait for a miracle. The Newthoughter prays to himself, and considers his prayer granted by taking it for granted that he already possessed everything by divine right. The true believer moves the Infinite to concede a wish. The Newthoughter removes the wish and conceives the Infinite.

The newthought person's achievement is a metaphysical catastrophe. He turns his mind inside out, and behold, the void has becomes riches. He not only pretends that his wish is already granted within him but that he himself is the answer. Poverty has only to desire wealth and immediately present the gold to itself. He says, "I am wealth, I am happiness, I am freedom, I am health, I am the All Good, I am love." The error is more grammatical than philosophical. Truly, the extreme pretension of new thought is nothing more than a grammatical error. When the thinker sees that he is not free, he asserts, "I am freedom." So that he becomes person, God, wisher and thing wished for. It is a monopoly. It is not fair. Say that two men are working for a corporation. One pure-minded fellow prays in the good old way for an extension of salary. The other is a Newthoughter, and affirms, "I am myself, eternal and everlasting, also infinite; I am the corporation; I am the salary; I am $200 a month; (a damned lie); I am prosperity; I am love; I am happiness." One fault in his theory is that the Assistant Secretary, for whom he toils, is too busy to think about it. The Secretary might be willing to believe that the New-

Digitized by Google

thoughter is God, but does not wish that the divinity be paid more than $75 a month, and tells him to work faster if indeed he be divine.

This is not the worst of the Newthoughter's infinite egotism. Remember, he is everlasting, back and forth. He not only possesses the universe in its present condition (with the exceptions of the evils thereof which he does not care for) but is everything that ever was. He can quote the Bible to prove it. He claims to be all the great warriors, the poets, the architects, painters and musicians—all the good ones. Instead of praising a thing ordinarily, he states, "It is sublime; it is I." He built the pyramids. He can prove that by that transcendental snollygoster, Ralph Waldo Emerson. He painted madonnas centuries ago. When he attempts to prove that he is Michael Angelo by designing a scene that resembles nothing under the sun, he calls it a spirit-picture.

Any New Thought society, for $25, will guarantee to award the student infinite power, and cure him of constipation. This is a low price for infinity alone. It is, though, more than was charged for making the sun stand still in Gideon. Still, the latter miracle was inferior to the gift of infinite power; and being cured of constipation were much more delectable than having the sun stand still.

The man who buys infinity for $25 would not be a sucker if he should refuse to pay for it in advance.

Orthodox religion is based on questions that man cannot answer. New Thought excels in this: it is based on that which one-third of the Triune God did not define; that is truth. New Thought is Truth. If Professor Hoffsnacker Vosniak had stood before Pilate, the answer would have been, "Join our Mystic Breathing Circle for $10, which can be paid in two installments of $5 each, and we will show you, brother

Digitized by Google

Pilate, the marvelous simplicity of Truth." It is quite likely that Pilate would have pungled out the ten. The only way to convince a man of anything is to make him pay for it in advance.

Some persons take to New Thought because they are tired of the old; some, because they have lost faith in palmistry. New Thought, Theosophy, palmistry, spiritualism, card-reading, crystal-gazing, astrology, mind-reading, fortune-telling, find peaceful accomodation in the one mind. There must be some connective idea running through all these occultisms. A more discreet occultist will disclaim card-reading; but in general they all love to peek into the future, whether through a crystal ball, a pack of cards, the planets, or any symbolic ornament of the impossible. Whatever is told for the good is Truth; and that is New Thought. It affirms that which is desired, and denies that which is unpleasant. The principle is that the disciple, being Truth, cannot tell a lie.

It is readily seen what attracts the suckers to this cult. Behold the program. A more aggrandizing bill of extravaganzas is not to be imagined. It works on the practical trait of human nature that the greater the offer the greater the belief, temporarily. If a vial of linament that cures lumbago is worth 25 cents, is not a medicine that drives the gargoyling lumbago out of creation worth many times more?

What chance of escape has the sucker when he is promised the following: Success, Health, Personal Attractiveness, Power, Realization, Love, Riches, Blessed Peace, Eternal Life, a Greater Career, Freedom, Happipiness, Youth, Magnetism, Holy Light, Good Appetite, Mystic Use ofthe Passions, Power to see spirits and receive their messages, Joy, Peace, Admiration, Identity with God, etc.?

Imagine a sallow, slack and weary, flat-breasted, for-

Digitized by Google

lorn and sour-stomached woman reading that list of miracles. She would give $25 for any one of them. And then to obtain all, with magazines, books, life-readings, and personal questions answered by the Inner Circle of the Brotherhood. Very soon, she is talking vibrations, astral bodies and health biscuits; meets a book agent that is living on a peanut diet and studying astrology. They hold hands in the darkness for table-rappings and materializations. The table doesn't rap for a rap, and the materialization is perceived to be a reflection from a window across the street. They pull down the blinds and hold hands again. Their patience gives out, but he does not let go her hands. Subsequently he borrows money from her, and a medium tells her that she will receive it back in due time. The unfortunate one points to her forehead and says, "God is here."

No one can refute any statement about God.

The subject should not be left without mentioning a curious hostility existing in creeds and thoughts; that is, the closer two of them are related the more unfriendly they are. The tie that binds is their main controversy. Christian Science avers that New Thought is not science, and orthodoxy says that Christian Science is not Christian. Every dogma is the universe measured in few mystic words. Every creed has a word that is antagonistic to its synonym in another creed. Religious beliefs are doubts of other beliefs. In telling of his aspirations, a certain tall, stoop-shouldered man once declared, "and there is one thing that I shall do before I die, and that is smash those damned Christian Scientists." "How?" he was asked. And he replied, "Astrology." The sun and the planets were not foretelling a new prophet in that century.

Spiritualism is a phase of New Thought; not that

Digitized by Google

phantoms are new, but the present generation of phantoms are somewhat disassociated with the true creeds. In the olden days were prophets and sorcerers. The Prophets, on account of their virtue, were supposedly given authorized rights in the supernatural. The sorserers carried on an illicit trade with the unknown; they were spiritual filibusters. The orthodoxies of today, while necessarily believing in souls, condemn and ignore intercourse with souls through spirit mediums. So, there are a number of people who, when supping at the supernatural, are prone to mix their own salad, waive all dogmas, and subject themselves to the wonders of experience. This is called New Thought because the ancients meddled with the same forces without thinking.

Far be it from our purpose to reflect the ghost of a doubt over that spirit-land that lies so accessible on the other side of the medium's curtain. One should have extreme delicacy in asserting what is not. Should a person of imagination deny the existence of ghosts he is immediately confronted with infinity, which is full of a number of things. Sometimes, though, our skeptical nature makes us despise the ghost that would leave Heaven to take part in a fifty-cent performance; and our esthetic soul sours to a ghost with talcum powder on its nose and an odor of perspiration about its armpits. But that is a matter of taste, not argument. The thing that we have in mind, with reference to suckers, is the so-called materialized spirit which in the dark cannot be distinguished from a living person, does nothing that a living person could not do, speaks nothing that a feeble fancy coud not invent. The performance being quite human, there is only the word of the medium to the effect that the obscured figure is a ghost. In order to substantiate the existence of spirits, she exhibits

Digitized by Google

a substantial shape of worldly flesh, weight the same as that of the average farmer's daughter.

There is a missing link between what we know and what we do not know. Imagination does the best it can to fill the space. If a man will accept flesh for spirit he but gives the partisans of spirit another excuse to evade the missing link of evidence. The medium has but skipped over the evidence and not added to it. The demand is for a spirit; this is answered by a real body and an argument that the body is a spirit materialized. Body and argument existed aplenty before. Every spirit manifestation is a compound of circumstances that are congenial to fraud. The sucker is fascinated by the nullification of logic. The two most interesting things in the world are logic and the absence of it. As the latter is to be had without effort, the sucker gets his pleasure without mental exercise; this is true pleasure, which ends in disappointment.

The Soldier

There is one divinity in real life before whom we hesitate to lay the sordid term of sucker. Nevertheless, in sooth, yet soothingly as possible, sucker he must be said to be, and the more so in that he must continue so, or his nation would continue not. In all due reverence, with sob at heart and moisture in eye, we must tag with "sucker" the wreath that we humbly lay at the feet of the soldier.

Consider what we owe him. Without his death, we should have neither national dignity nor peaceful inspiration. Without his death, our every-day achieve-

Digitized by Google

ments would sink back into cringing commercialism. Without his death, we should be skulking, peering hypocrites. Our pompous blood would become stale and unaspiring in its veins, without his death.

Statesmen make history; the soldier is history. The nation has no life until the soldier's life overflows the battlefield. What can be greater than patriotism that causes men to march proudly in thousands—that leads the image of God to breast the bullet-waves of war. The gift of the Infinite and Eternal is resigned to the uses of the flag. Love of life is forgotten in the sweetness of a patriotic wound. The love of woman is lost in the sublimity of death.

Courage is the heart of all things. Etymologically, "heart" and "courage" are the same. Courage is necessary to achievement. But then, even as a man may be bold in one way and timid otherwise, so does a nation thrive on the basis of maintaining its courage in one department and its cowardice in another. This is necessary, as far as the nation is concerned. And in this, the soldier must be regarded as no more human than the gun in his hands. Could a gun be invented to obey orders, the soldier would be useless. His business is to kill and be killed. He relinquishes all claims to his own person. He is not only courageous, he constitutes the courage of that part of the nation that does not fight. Should he survive, he may be permitted to share the good that he has won. He has taken a thrilling chance and should have a thrilling reward. Should he die, his blood and glory go into the peace and good will of the non-combatants—into their security, their oratory, their politics, art, science and poetry, their wealth and their honor.

There is no avoidance of such conditions except in a military government, where every man, serving his time as a soldier and taking chance of being called

Digitized by Google

upon, could reasonably enjoy the victory won by succeeding takers of the chance. A republic does not abide such expensive routine. A republic thrusts its uniformed heroes out of itself, out of republican institutions into army life, the army being a nomadic despotism. Whatever the theory of a republican government it could not be maintained without an army, which is the most unrepublican government known to man. During his term, the soldier is a slave.

It is not unsurmisable therefore that the soldier may recoil vengefully against his country, capture and make a despotism of it. Almost every country has at one time or another become politically involved with its own captains, and surrendered to them. The victorious soldier has not a high regard for the men who send his rations.

There is than patriotism no sentiment more to the internal welfare of mankind. Atheism, intemperance, laxity of marriage laws, injustice, gambling and sensation may exist in a country, and even be glorified by art; but unto the country itself, there must be the virtue of patriotism. To that extent, the heroes are put into the most beautiful surroundings where man and Nature combine their energies. The arrayed steel, the mystic power of the weapons, the wonder-thumping of cavalry, the terrific tramp of embellished ranks, the bugles, the music, the flag in the wind, are a sumptuous enclosure, lighting the sucker with a sense of magnificence, converting him from a man of prudence to a thing of wild imagination. In the protected territory, within the circling warriors, the war is financed, and diplomatic relations are felt for future commerce. Those that remain at home contribute their loud-bursting rhetoric, the thanks of history, and the plaudits of a soldier's grave. These poetic touches

Digitized by Google

are held out to the soldier in exchange for his life, which must be used.

A man is not a man, he can have no full realization of life, until he has faced death in some form. It is probable that one does not know what life is until he has been at least once in battle. Peradventure, after such experience, he may know far less than he did before.

War is the critical point of racial advance. What could better conduce to the noblest form of life than the noblest form of death? For the suckers that survive this duty, there can be no adequate reward. Concerning those that have been slaughtered, we can but honor ourselves by weeping for them. The soldier with his haversack of glory and the workingman with full dinner-pail are but objects for meditation rather than reform. In time, both take their revenge.

The Lover

Should men make love as seldom as they marry, the world would not do a tenth of the business it now does. All the world sells to a lover.

This is a very sentimental chapter, and is intended to prove that folly is an inspiration of much honor. Love is a search for happiness; and when the bloodhounds of disappointment are keen on the scent, the chase is awe-inspiring. What is so beautiful and necessary on earth as a ruined castle with a fool sobbing in the moonlight?

There is no such thing as loving wisely. Wisdom does not love. We know things for what they are, and love them for what we wish them to be.

A man does not know himself until he is exhausted.

Digitized by Google

Only by emptying his heart to the dregs does he mark its full measure. To be true to creation, we must overwork ourselves and our passions, even though we give all and receive nothing. That is angelic. What would be the good of an unforgiving angel? The Devil does no more than his duty.

Now, in a just and equitable world, such as our own, it is not the duty of any man to be greater than his fellows; for greatness cannot be compensated. From that standpoint, the great man is a sucker. At the outset, he looked forward to honors and gratitude that were impossible. When he has construed the inscrutible and found fame worthless, he still goes on. That is greatness.

Extraordinary sentiment over anything is likely to make a man a sucker. The lover is, in a way, a great man, and, of course, a sucker—in general when he perceives that the mystery with long hair has a mania for shop-windows; and, in particular when, at his expense she wantons with his fires to test her tempered steel.

No man can do justice to himself and to a woman's beauty at the same time. To treat her according to her merits as a plain human being, which, in the majority of cases, she is, would satisfy neither her vanity of what she is nor his of what he is getting. Still, the majority of persons cannot believe that they belong to the majority of cases.

When he spends six months of his income vainly trying to ascertain whether she loves him or not, he is a sucker. For when his money is gone, he ascertains without cost. He is a sucker when he allows her to persuade him that her companionship has a high monetary value which he must meet continually. He is doubly a sucker when she conceals from him the fact that he is but half a sucker in conjunction with a rival.

Digitized by Google

Suppose that, after a few preliminary sessions in the parlor, seizing the outrageous glory of a kiss, exchanging of books and conceits, conquest of blushes, posturing at piano, watching the heavenly stars become dots of lovers' fires, the lovesick orator should ask her does she love him. She herself would be a sucker if she give him a plain answer. She would have to go without many comfortable hesitations, that seem but passionate falterings, until the actual husbandman arrives on the scene. The suitor is given, at least, a fair opportunity to show his utmost; nor could she weigh him accurately until his extravagance has nothing left to be weighed and he has taken back his wit's end in despair.

He is no longer so young that he will be content to play in the sands of love. She must take him out into a sensual tempest, or he will not be interested. If not fondled until he extends and empassions himself, he will stretch himself and yawn. He loves; and it would be wrong of her, it would be a spurned blessing, if she rebuff him immediately. Forasmuch, it may be that she will fall in love with him later on. Love, the great scene-shifter, stands near. At any moment he may change a private dining-room to a bower of idolatrous bliss; or turn sublimity to a tear-soaked handkerchief for one or the other. It is gambling with the gods, and the Biped with the Coin puts up the stakes. Every act of spending is a wager anyway: you bet that you get your money's worth. This the supplicant must discover for himself. Just as in a school of stage-acting, some instructions are in the manner of falling to the floor without injuring the backbone, so in real romance the sucker must learn to fall from his ideal without hurting his heart.

It is not improbable that we have been in error as to romance. We were misled by the books and

Digitized by Google

poems. From these we have drawn a belief that Jack the Kisser goes into places of moonlight, and into parlor with gas turned low in the moon of frosted glass, and through leafy lanes, hand in hand with the luminous damsel who does not know whether she is walking on sanctified clouds or plain ordinary roses; whether his arm is a human arm or a jeweled serpent of sin. This is a slight suggestion of the mere scenic illusions of love, as related in the story-books.

Try it, any one who would stare at vacancy like an owl. Try it, to wit: to woo the maid with silver moon, dim parlor and leafy lane. The girl that would agree to such a courtship would be an impractical nature, or maybe weary of life, or she may not have awakened to the advantages of this epoch; and it would not do to have some other affectionist awake her, later. In short, she is behind the times, and in all probability, so far behind that she is not born yet.

The model girl would feel that the gallant who is courting her by the aid of silver moon is buying incandescent pleasures for another. Leafy lanes are occasionally welcome when the overflowing elegance of a summer night floods the soul, and the fragrance of earth overcomes the earthiness of the fragrance, or the laundry is late. But the animated girl—the tall, stately, tilt-hatted, voluptuous, wide-eyed, purse-dangling, fascinating, fault-finding, aristocratic honey-cooler, is not to be duped with moonshine. It there is to be dupery, it must be something expensive and worth yarning about next day.

Women are aware of the sucker's two traits previously mentioned: that he is a coward and a knave, and they treat him as he deserves; transform him into a pleasure resort; which is the best thing that may be done with him.

In purchasing the follies and inventions of his time,

Digitized by Google

and in the debt that every man owes to the general good, there is nothing more joyous than liquidating his liabilities with a woman. But only a sucker would believe that he is buying love that way. Love cannot be bought with either moon or money; which is a pity, for the moon seems easily to be got by a lover for his sweetheart. Love cannot be bought, it appears; like a rainbow, it just comes—and truly, in all its gorgeous expanse, just as seldom.

These conditions are brilliant phases of life to a brilliant mind; for if every sucker could buy love, the one perfect woman in the world would be sought by these Bipeds with the Coin, and the ideal man could never pretend to have found her. Imagine rainbows purchasable! Why, the idealist would never get sight of one. Then it is evident that in romance, as in other difficulties, the suckers perform a vast service to humanity. They gather up all the mercenary women, leaving the sincere others quite conspicuous and so neglected that they study politics and reforms for the nation and ethics for everybody.

There are strange and plutocratish things, whose cost is hung with golden spangles, and which the sucker has seldom if ever purchased. The lady prattles of them as if they were common as hairpins to her. And he, to impress her that he is a very hell-bender of a spendthrift, promises them one after another. She has a way of foreclosing those promises while seemingly thinking of other matters more to his liking. And yet she does not often thank him enthusiastically, fearing lest he deem her unaccustomed to luxury. So he might have begun as a romantic, moon-storming lover, but sees himself eventually nothing more than our old friend and sucker, the Biped with the Coin.

In the course of time, passion-face concludes that if

Digitized by Google

he cannot have the woman's love he might as well take the woman. It is the sucker that fancies in the beginning that buying the woman is buying her love.

He told her that he was intoxicated with the wine of her lips; and he himself does not appreciate the truth of this at once, nor that she took advantage of his intoxication. However, no one is more sober than the man who emerges from a drunken sleep or a lover's dream. He wants something for footing the bills of her procrastinated refusal; and, if he does not lose his head, he may redeem himself. Her object was not matrimony; yet, after her expensive negative, she may not be averse to glimpses of honeymoon. What he yearned for was a simple Yes; what he got was a $1000 or a $10,000 No, according to his coin. So he steadies himself, investigates the pampered beauty without illusion, wearies himself not with Yes and No, but applies himself to the subtle paradoxical charms between and around.

Frequently the lover has a lady whose wealth is his tenfold; still he acts as the Biped with the Coin, leading her through the mazes of luxury at night, and worrying through his flourishing maze of creditors in the daytime. A woman with one-fourth the income of a man is wealthier than he, for her pleasures cost her nothing. She keeps herself alive to be amused by others. In order to have pleasure, all that a woman need do is to resist gently. Her lover, his rival and her platonic friend furnish her with the gaieties. There is no better established rule than that a woman should not pay her own way. That is why she is so fond of having it.

The unaccepted lover, having declared his passion in every form of language, from infant's google to blank verse, oft succeeds in doing naught save exaggerate the lady's ego. A woman's exaggerated ego is

Digitized by Google

a most costly piece of spirtuality to handle. It if be true that the old-fashioned swain began his love-making with the question, Can you cook, he might have been unpoetic; his practical nature may have lost him a bride now and then; but he did not exaggerate the lady's ego nor watch the regiment of his dollars pass with muffled drums into the gloom.

The business affairs of a lover are now and then in such a state that his income is frosted over for several months. He must go to his savings to continue acquaintance with the ego he has exaggerated. He flattered her up to the tantrums of extravagance, diligently impressed her with the fact that she was unreasonably attractive to his heart, and then expected her to listen to reason at what he considers a time for it.

In the leisure moments of his wooing, the sucker is not as idle as is supposed. He acts as a rival and as a platonic friend to two other women, disbursing his minor cash to their escapades. He must do this in self protection; for when my-pretty-maid takes to quarreling and will not see him, he must go elsewhere with his passion. And should she relinquish him altogether, he must have some other latent love affair so well procreated that it can be resorted to without a melancholy interval. We are well aware that in the books and poems, he does otherwise. But in the sort of life we have known, he takes to the next girl. Now and then he drowns his sorrow in matrimony with her.

These are not rare cases; the theaters and restaurants are full of them. Singleness of purpose is a fine thing; beauty is plural. Man has one heart; but it has four compartments, all of them busy. He has also a brain with many wrinkles; he has five senses in his flesh, with a love of variety; he has seven days in his week. A little multiplication would be appro-

Digitized by Google

priate here. Suffice to say, though, a man is not, throughout his many fibers, multitudinously asleep whenever his lady love has the blues. Why, the ordinary sentimental sucker, leading a broad life on $150 a month, must have all his interests and his every faculty psychologized. For and unto this, he has a merry-go-round of women consisting of the girl to whom he is engaged, and the girl to whom some other sucker is engaged, and the girl to whom he was engaged hitherto (and who perhaps thinks he is yet), and a widow, and a married lady suing for a divorce; not to count the clumsy girl in the old dress. When they interfere, he borrows money on the day before payday, and on the second day before the next payday, and on the third day before the next, and so on, until two paydays are required to pay his debts. Then he loses his position and must sit in the moonlight with the clumsy girl in the old dress. Eventually he reappears on the glad streets with money obtained, nobody knows how and the girl to whom he is engaged, who accuses him of having passed the interim with the widow. His money gone, he again retires to seclusion; returns for three days and a good time with the other sucker's bethrothed, who charges him with having spent his time with the lady suing for divorce. Missed for a while again, he suddenly swoops down upon civilization with a dollar and fifteen cents, takes his old love to a cheap show, sits her down to ice cream (how he scowls at the restaurants now) and then it is, O romantic reader, that, with his coin gone, said biped ruminates upon study and work and long walks.

He did love one of those girls; he cannot remember which, for he hates them all now. Each one, in turn, he had gazed upon as his life's mate, told her that she had more influence on his life than had any other wo-

Digitized by Google

man. Each one he now remembers as merely a good-time girl.

The Girl with the Demon Lover

Nature has laid a painful trap for women, and made her carry it. Of the fruit of good and evil, woman must take the seeds with the sweetness.

What entitles the girl to a chapter in the book of suckers occupies a little place just below love, and is known as flirtation. In her excitement she may fail to distinguish between flirtation and love. As love leads logically to marriage, and flirtation only unexpectedly so, it is plain that when the girl supplies the logical connection where nothing serious was intended, she is playing the reformers game, Leaping at Conclusions. Marriage is a subject upon which women are presumed expert. Experts are not sentimental. As long as a woman lets her wisdom hold, she is on solid footing; when she is gladdened by sentiment, she is apt to take a long, oblique, downward course, featly as a fairy gliding down a moonbeam. The moment any one surrenders to sentiment, he or she is in the hands of the enemy.

Who has read most about ghosts is the most likely person to see one, and be credulous of a counterfieit. She who meditates most on marriage is most apt to be misled by an illusion, especially in regard to a proposal of marriage. Frequently she does not know what is Not a Proposal.

She ought to be suspicious when she is called upon to interpret. She may be a very compatible girl and allow the casual kiss-beggar to operate upon her emotions. She may confuse the way he does it with the

Digitized by Google

way he should, and wonder if it be love. If he makes her guess his purpose, he is making a sucker of her. There is no mystery about a sincere person. The question of insincerity should always be answered in the affirmative, unless there be mitigating circumstances; and these the trickster usually contrives to have ready.

If there is one bit of deception in a woman that reacts upon her with deadly effect, it is her apparent disinclination toward marriage; this attracts the lip-smith and libertine. Few men would care to climb a lightning-rod when the flashes are overhead. The house of love has many queer entrances. Few adventurers would be so quick at the rod if the air were surcharged with direct and expressive ideas flashing matrimony. The crafty ones look to fair weather and soft, unalarming skies for their climb.

Of this, one may be sure: the man that is about to propose marriage is solemn as a soldier in the imminence of his first battle. This is the mood of anybody about to do anything for the first time. And he is not altogether sprightly on the second occasion. The lover, if sincere, in sight of wedlock's preliminary splendors, is deeply marvelous. He desires to bear himself well, and will not rest until absolutely understood and until he gets an unequivocal answer. He goes into important details and a thousand others, with exquisite variety. He feels quite ceremonious. He does not propose during a waltz, nor in a crowded street-car, nor over a gin fizz, nor introduces the subject with indecent stories, nor dawdles through the months in a way that at once tickles the neck of curiosity and scratches the head of doubt. Nor will he woo her in slang, predicting with flippant hypothesis, If you'll be my hot potato I'll be your potato-masher. He does not intend to marry the woman he wins in

Digitized by Google

that guise. Furthermore, he has no unorthodox theory of something just as good as matrimony. The libertine, the anarchist, the free-lover, the socialist, the voluptuary, the individualist, the affinity, the soul-mate, the reincarnated lover, and who not, have their special forms of amorous plea. When they desire a wife, they are all one. The true lover is a Puritan, no matter what his previous philosophy.

Perhaps every woman has memory of a number of men who made momentous love without seeming to be aware of such a thing as a wedding. These men used all the poetry, eloquence, calisthenics and clutches that might have been thought indivisible from the idea of wedlock, such as "forever," "my own," "my first and only love," "my happiness," "my harbinger of heaven"; but they miraculously avoided the two words, "wife" and "marriage." These did not seem to come within their purview of Heaven and earth. There was a tacit intimation that marriage is Hell. With their minds on the horizon of forever, they forgot to ask her to name the day in the center.

Perhaps there are many women not fond of wedding-cake; do not esteem the frosted decoration much of a grace to the fruity goodness. Cupid is not as young as he was, and the maidenly art of self defence may have undergone modifications in modern years. There is, on the other hand, many a young woman, who, meeting with a likely looking chap, feels the fragrant marital breezes ventilate her windows. She may be so modest as to deny her expectations, relying on his; also on her monopolizable person. She may be a girl of many charms, that dangle on silver chains. She may have many moods (principally an interrogative) and tenses, containing a past, as they say in books. She overhauls her wardrobe, performs

Digitized by Google

transfigurations on her complexion, and freaks up her hair. She yields to the heart-snatcher in bacchanalian kisses and receives the brunt of his passion with a timid gasp. After months of wonderment and interpretation, she may hear him use the words "wife" and "marriage," in an indirect way; and she is sucker enough to relate those words to his previous florid expression, merely because she has found that he actually has those two words in his vocabulary. She assumes they portend to her.

Then and there she may have good cause to hold him at bay before those two words. Now comes the downfall. At first, he will pretend not to understand. When the matter is thoroughly and painfully explained to him, he will go into a little reverie, consult with his inner consciousness, darkly hint that there is something on his mind, arouse her interrogative mood on the subject, and then slowly will he extravasate something of the following fluid melancholy, which may be entitled, Eight Good Methods for Quieting a Misinterpreted Proposal. He says:

That recently he has been very much annoyed by a certain married woman who is much in love with him and jealous and who threatens to throw off discretion and cause a scandal should he announce his engagement to another. Or,

That his mother has chosen an heiress for him, a good enough young woman but for whom he cares nothing, yet for whose sake his mother would disinherit him for refusing, and therefore he had better be careful and wait an opportunity for pleasing himself. Or,

That there is a certain widow, with whom he has never been in love, but who, sad to say, infatuated him a little when he was young; that she has loaned

Digitized by Google

him several sums of money, and for the sake of her generosity he does not wish to tell her that he never loved her; moreover, although she has been persevering with his heart for a long time, she herself is coming to realize the true state of affairs and in time will gradually quitclaim herself. So it were wise to await the future. Or,

That he is about to make some important business arrangements wherein (modestly) he implies that not only his business qualifications but his personality has something to do with the case, there being a certain woman who has much influence in the matter; that he has met her a few times, and though he has not made love to her, nor she to him, she being married, yet an announcement of his engagement might spoil the chance of his life. So he had better be silent for a while. Or,

That a month ago he received the surprise of his life in the shape of a letter from a young woman he knew last year, and to whom he had never made love, but herself had proposed to him, and, at that time, for the sake of not hurting the girl's feelings, he had not refused her offer in language sufficiently strong. though he thought then that he had expressed himself to the understanding of any intelligent woman, but now she seems to assume that he had accepted her, and he must take time to correspond with her and show her the mistake. Or,

That a certain friend of his, one of the best men he had ever known, made a little error with some money that had been entrusted to him, there being no criminal intent, but the world would not understand, and the friend had come to him in an awful fright, and for the sake of this man he had taken all the responsibility upon himself, and might have to take a trip out

Digitized by Google

of town shortly to straighten matters out, and whatever he does he hopes she will always believe in his innocence, because she is the only outsider that knows all the facts; so that they had better postpone any formal announcement. Or,

That he has to support his mother, and his brother is sick and out of work, and there have been so many emergencies and unforseen expenses that marriage for him for a time would be quite out of the question. Or,

That for some time he has been troubled in mind, not with her but with himself, for he has become alarmed at slowly having to recognize the fact that he is not good enough for her. Why marry her only to make her unhappy.

Many a girl will be able to check off these eight good rules, and mayhap recall some crank that invented a ninth. But originality in love affairs has never been known to succeed. The good old tricks, the good old songs and the good old jokes never lose their power to thrill. Conservatism is the largest part of man; it is entirely without defense to a conservative attack.

But all this does not explain the title to this chapter, The Girl with the Demon Lover. It is this: The amorous desperado who is suddenly beset with circumstances where he must use violent strategy to elude the subject of marriage, does act as if possessed with a demon. The lady perhaps fears she may labor too realistically under an illusion, and inquires: All joking aside, when is this first and only gambol through passionate infinity going to have a public celebration?

His reasons and motives thus excavated, the demon lover has abruptions of the intellect, fits of depression and longings for solitude. He arises in a havoc,

Digitized by Google

paces the floor, and returns to a caress. He makes appointments and breaks them unaccountably. He leaves early in the evening on mysterious errands; swears that it is not to see another woman; writes wild and incoherent letters that hint of terrible matters; mutters sentences that he can neither explain nor remember; alludes to blood-curdling events in the past; takes the girl to an entertainment and, without warning, leads her away; claims to be the victim of a conspiracy; recites deeds of heroism that he fears will bring punishment upon him, though at the time he acted entirely within his conscience; disappears for periods long and short; returns with a changed manner, appearance and conversation; acknowledges blowholes in his memory; tells her not to be afraid if something weird should happen to him. Merely wishing to divert her attention from marriage, he has her expectation tormented to death, while he writhes lest her anxious thoughts take the form of jealousy. In short, he so works on her apprehensions that the poor sucker of a girl thinks he is bewitched, or that some god or devil wooed her in the guise of a man whose unearthly familiars are harassing him for his return to elfland.

He was only an ordinary chap with a lady-bug on the brain. His sincerity was burlesque; his sorrow, nonsensical. His was the kind of diabolical sorrow that wipes its nose with a monkey-wrench and then gives the scrap-iron laugh. And she, she, perhaps gulped her misery, went to bed early and sang her heart a lullaby.

She remembers when he coaxed and stroked her reluctant sweetness and whispered with the voice of untutored angels at her ear.

Now and then the demon is caught in the net she

Digitized by Google

has woven around him and his own toils; and in his struggles he learns that when a woman sees herself a sucker she can make it hot even for a devil. This should not be astonishing, after the devil has warmed her up.

The Sucker in Search of Happiness

The failure of the confessed seeker of happiness is indispensible to our content.

The prospector of gold mines is admirable; he aims to acquire riches in the simplest way possible. He is businesslike and scientific. The man who searches for happiness is looking for that which no one ever found.

Love, riches, ambition, philosophy, opium, travels, charity, lust, Nature, art, science, drink, books are some of the places where man has sought happiness. Give me such and such, he exclaims, and I will be happy. This kind of sucker certainly is the coward and knave that we have noticed of all the breed. How could a man be happy protected from everything that is unbeautiful to others? What a knave would be the happy man that stands a while on a street corner. A sardonic Providence does not allow the existence of such a creature. Without ever having been happy for a minute (full sixty seconds) the sucker looks for something that will felicitate him for all time.

The sucker who desires happiness is better off as he is. He would be a greater sucker were he happy. He would be a conceited, idiotic monstrosity, and hated. Even in order to be approximately pleased, he would have to possess a dozen things of which few men attain one. Health, wealth and love might be a good beginning. At that he must possess an amount

Digitized by Google

of discipline to prevent his wealth from buying too much food for his health. He might have health, wealth and love, and still be a fool. Well then, give him brains. Then the trouble begins. With brains, it seems that he would have to think. Thought is not a bird of epicurean beak. It is rather of flock of various wings, with as many carrion crows as humming-birds. Besides, an appreciation of the sorrows brings about the acuter joys.

However, this is all off the line. This sucker muses on something of which he has read in books, and is angered when he finds that life is lacking in stage technic. He finds that people are envious, treacherous, cross, businesslike. His wife makes him jealous; wealthier men try to absorb his fortune; the poor criminal attempts to steal it; life is bad for the health. Ambition brings flatterers and slanderers; philosophy takes him to the unattainable; Nature is full of bugs. Altogether, he is in the world, with a myriad people and a myriad things encroaching upon the objects which he considered sacred to his own use.

There are said to be mechanical ways of feeling happy. Cultivate the lungs and muscles of the jaw; then laugh. Laugh loud and long at everything and everybody. Gurgle while eating and drinking. Give the glorious guffaw to everything living and dead. Try it first on a sucker.

The Optimist and the Pessimist

There are times for each of these men, to distract our attention from the feelings of the other.

The optimist and the pessimist live in the same

Digitized by Google

castle; one points out the banners above the tower; the other, the dungeons within. The optimist leads Progress by the ear; the pessimist hangs on to its tail. The clever man sits on its back. The optimist and the pessimist are suckers, for reasons that will appear anon. In the mean time, a fable:

An optimist and a pessimist, both members of a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, went into the jungle; the optimist wishing to photograph a giraffe. The pessimist carried a gun, acceding to the conventions in that part of the country. After wandering for two days, their provisions gave out. They lost their way and became hungry, optimist and pessimist. The pessimist cursed his luck, and the optimist prayed for food. At that moment, two gentle and inoffensive antelopes came sprinting opportunely along, and the pessimist shot one of them. He wore three medals for shooting at a target, and carried in his pocket a box of windmatches, with which he built a fire around a choice piece of antelope steak, after the optimist's last sulphur match had blown out. Having partaken of their meal, they again waited for giraffe. Presently a large, ferocious and ill-natured lion, attracted by the smell of venison, approached. It was owing entirely to the untameability and threatening manner of this beast that the pessimistic member of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was obliged to send a bullet through its heart, thereby saving not only his own life but that of the optimist, leastwise for a time. They were admiring the deceased king of beasts with a sad, the-king-is-dead look in their eyes, when another lion, with a long-live-the-king roar, attacked the optimist from the rear, and proceeded to eat him. This gave the pessimist the op-

Digitized by Google

portunity of escape, of which he made free use, having no other cartridge on his person and being unable to reach another, as the optimist was being devoured over the ammunition-box. Arriving at the village, the pessimist, who was not a wealthy man, interested some capitalists in a relief expedition to recover the optimist's skull, which was subsequently found intact and clean. This the pessimist took back with him to his native land. With the surplus of the relief expedition and money accrued from the sale of savage implements, he married an interesting young woman, who quarreled with him upon uncovering some old love letters in his trunk; and, the pessimist using some coarse and abusive language full pessimistic of the lady's earthly past and spiritual future, she sued him for divorce. Afterwards he did a number of things, the last of which was to die.

Moral: What we greatly desire is pure reason unpolluted with fact.

The optimist does not look on the bad side; he is afraid of it. The pessimist looks on the bad side, being fascinated with fear. One eats the bride's first biscuits in a sentimental fear of the bride; the other refuses in fantastic fear of the biscuits. Both are cowards to some degree, the pessimist in the main. He is afraid of everything but an optimist.

The damnable traits of these two gentlemen is their habit of appearing at the wrong time. When we are trying to drill the money market with a brilliant scheme, and are engaged over the hypothetical profits, the pessimist pays us a visit. When we have not a cent or a scheme in the world, the optimist comes and confides in us a scheme of his own. Moreover, the one man is sometimes found fulfilling the office of good and evil prophet. We often have cause to won-

Digitized by Google

der why on one occasion we behold a man shaking the sleigh-bells at folly, and on another smashing the windows of honest mirth. The reason is that the sleigh-bells are his own, but the windows are not.

He is a sucker who thinks too much about matters which do not concern him, as, for instance, the meaning of life. Cowardice nags him to interpret it; knavery impels him to boast of interpreting it right. Infinity still keeps us aguessing. Why trust a man who judges pleasure by the way it makes him feel next day, or by the way it will make him feel after he is dead?

It behooves us to consider, therefore, whether or not there are such persons as optimist and pessimist, and if there be, whether they are two persons or one. Go eat a roll of butter and think it over.

As a matter of fact, without cavil, quibble or circumbendibus, an optimist talks about himself; you talk to a pessimist. One man. The optimist is a sucker for believing in everybody; the pessimist is a sucker for believing in himself. If the optimist were not a coward, he would gaily poison a few persons to show that there is nothing calamitous in the tragedy either for the victims or himself. If the pessimist were not a coward, he would kill the optimist, and thus gain our esteem, or commit suicide and let us prove that we are noble enough to forgive the dead.

The Sucker Who Fears Public Opinion

It is imperative that people act in accordance with one another's wishes. We could not get along without the sucker who fears the others. He is necessary

Digitized by Google

to the peace of the state. Imagine a man brave enough to think for himself. He would be a genius; and prithee consider a country populated with geniuses. Each would be a nation, a religion, a philosophy and set of customs unto himself. Children think for themselves and care naught for public opinion. Fortunately they are small and can be easily flogged into submission.

Public Opinion is the dame to whom even a king must take off his hat, even though he blacken her eyes once in a while. Hence the observation that whatever is done in public is a matter of opinion; what is not done in public is a matter of conscience. The distinction is not quite clear yet, but is readily made so by the old conundrum, When is a door not a door? The answer being, When somebody is peeking through the keyhole. All sorts of performances may go on within the door, provided it is a door; that is, if it constitutes an effective barrier to the vision. A man's duty to himself is to be an egotist; his duty to the public is to keep the fact to himself. He is a fool for complying with the public; he is a fool for letting the public know he doesn't. He owes it to the public to use the finest precaution against becoming notorious. Wherefore, we have the moral: After locking the door, hang your hat over the keyhole. Thus no one is offended; which is all that Public Opinion demands. As the sentry at the fort says, You can pluck those flowers; but don't let me see you.

You may not, but you can; and if you do, seem to not. That is as far as Public Opinion goes—propriety. Morality is something else. Most people fail to distinguish between the two. Good taste confuses the subject still more. In illustration of this, suppose that at dinner-table, Peter is possessed of a piece

Digitized by Google

of pumpkin pie, and leaves the room for a few minutes. If, during such absence, Paul should clandestinely acquire Peter's pie and eat it, the act would be theftous and immoral. If, however, Paul should subjugate the pie boisterously, as a good practical joke on Peter, and consume said pastry with boasts and laughter, he would add impropriety to the misdeed. Whenas, eating Peter's pie with Paul's carving knife would be a breach of good taste, to say nothing of the bad manners involved. Public Opinion would concern itself with the second and third cases. For, in the first instance, Paul could have slyly replaced Peter's full plate with an empty one, and, on subsequent inquiry as to the pie, could maintain that Peter himself had eaten it before leaving the room. If Peter is not satisfied with this explanation, but should pursue an investigation among the other guests, then he is acting in bad taste; and if he expostulate obstreperously, impropriety is on him. Then, if Paul turn to him, and in kindly voice adjure him, "My dear sir, I am as deeply grieved as yourself over this unfortunate question. Believe me, it is not guiltily but only to promote good will, that I offer you ten cents with which to get yourself another piece of pie. If that does not content you, I can only say that I am ready to defend my honor with my life,"—public opinion will shift to Paul's side, already wavering at the others inadvisable conduct. Public Opinion cares not who ate the pie, but rather admires a gracious manner of avoiding the subject.

With these differentiations in mind, it is easily seen that Public Opinion is a complex Lady with rings on her fingers and her skirt over her toes. She does not condemn a gentleman for having a little mystery about him. Within that mystery, he may do what he pleases.

Digitized by Google

Both the punishment and the reward of Public Opinion is an uncertain thing known as Talk. It is the private opinion of some persons that Talk is cheap. But this applies only to the Talk of cheap men. Other Talk is very expensive. Millions of dollars are required to cause Talk in fashionable circles and ovals, and prevent it in others. A nation will spend large sums of money in fleet maneuvers to cause Talk among other nations. Agricultural counties subscribe money to cause Talk. Mammonitish women wear diamonds to cause Talk. Poets buy fancy wines for their friends to cause Talk. In all these cases of purchased Public Opinion, the dainty skill is in not causing people to talk too much. Calamity is ever hunting for suckers. Pleasing everybody is unsubstantial work. Private Opinion may ingratiate Public Opinion for years; then suddenly, a slip of the tongue and a slap in the face.

A nation spends millions of money in diplomatic relations, then forgets to salute another's flag, and there is war-talk. A banquet is given to the belles and bullyboys of skyhigh society, and for a while the small-talk is so witty that fig-leaves turn to glass, when to the consternation of all, somebody blushes at the wrong time; and then the big talk. A Merchants' Municipal Club is entertaining a politician; platitudes and sandwiches pass blithely in opposite directions, when one grocer calls another Dutchman; and then there is frog-jumping back to the puddle.

All these little contingencies the sucker must look to, if he would succeed in a world of Public Opinion. The process is, evade the facts and avoid argument. Everybody wishes to rise in the world; there are few who like to tell truthfully how they have arisen. To

Digitized by Google

sympathize with the past is to retard Progress. The sucker must therefore change with the times and Public Opinion. He is not to boast of the old eternal things, nor of anything that is out of accord with public acclaim, even though he rejoice privately in the coarser deeds of that classic thing, the human body. The following facts are known to all and should never be mentioned in society: hats may change in style, but foreheads are much as they were. Ostentation may vary from time to time, but simplicity is always the same. Love in a cottage may lose its sentiment, but love in a barn will go on forever. And the blessing of this is that worthless bawbles are, by Public Opinion magically transformed into strenuous treasures, while the commonplaces of life are made private, personal, obscure, mystic and sacred.

There is a funny little fellow who lives in a magnificent home, into which he sneaks every day after business hours. He is a low comedian in the comedy of wealth, and differs from the common Biped with the Coin in that he does not even understand what luxury is and what use his family makes of it. He does not understand why he must sit in an uncomfortable chair after dinner or keep awake for visitors. He has never studied Public Opinion. His wife has done so in French, and translates for him. Once he was a contended shop-keeper growing a double chin on $10,000 a year. Now he is nervous and saggy on $100,000. Perhaps he does not wish to make $100,000 a year. In his heart he is still an ignorant little shop-keeper dreaming of the old homestead in Pennsylvania and the old fashioned ways of his mother. His wife and daughter having noticed him doing business on the $100,000 basis, temporarily as he thought,

Digitized by Google

compelled him to stay there, allowing him about $1000 for himself. And he acquires indigestion, insomnia and softening of the brain amid the alarms of his income. It is almost a compliment to call him a sucker.

Then there is a sucker that can just afford to exist. Public Opinion causes him to leave cheaply on the sly during the odd moments, that he may appear extravagant at others. He belongs to a club, but cannot go there often, cause its whiskey has raised the price of conversation. He dines there once a week with the savings of a canned-bean diet. He is impressed with the very practical theory that clothes make the man. They do. Fortunately for many, they do. After everything else has failed, it is merciful that clothes make the man. This sucker can smilingly wear a gaudy vest while his stomach beneath it is full of indigestible emptiness. He has a grudge against his appetite for being a sort of cruelty to art. Apparently he eats for the purpose of commending the cook; and starves to buy a curio. Altogether he has a good outside effect. Long live this sucker; and when he dies, may the pall-bearers be the most respectable members of the community.

Public Opinion intimidates the sucker from thinking—fortunately, for the chances are that he would think incorrectly if he dared. Gallantly he assents to everything that is demanded by the more rational persons in power, and acts as an understudy to celebrities. At a prize-fight, he yells approbation at the victor, to create the impression of having bet money on him. Seated beside the flimsy maid, he accords with her whims, murmurs How-true to her numerous ecstacies, and sneers with her at all that her young soul has found sneerable. In the political prejudices of her father he joins, for fear of being considered an

Digitized by Google

enemy to the state. When the dear girl promises herself to him, he purchases an engagement ring whose price he feels for the next six months.

He will relate the faults of a friend that is being slandered, laugh at a philosophy that is being ridiculed, curse an unconvicted wretch that is charged with crime, and discard an unstylish necktie with equal insouciance. He will gorge on the food that a wealthy man praises, copy the clothes of spendthrifts, clap his hands at the play he is told he must see. He will ignore the woman that others call dowdy, and forsake a friend that has quarreled with the majority; doubt his religion when it is discredited by a prodigal son, and assume an ideal when it is popular; test the favorite liverpills of his employer, and do many other things that go without saying, as asked of him.

He should not hastily be called a traitor to manhood; he is merely a martyr to Public Opinion. All his acts are proper, and, in truth, more gracefully carried out than might seem from their jotty enumeration.

Public Opinion's relation to morality is this: propriety recognizes good morals as widespread.

Hereinbefore, propriety was defined; and here is a good opportunity to state, once for all, what morality is and what it is not. Morality is a limitation of human nature; it is not the nature. On this point religion, common sense and common observation are absolutely at one. Morality issued from religion. Religion does not assert that that morality is inbred of us. On the contrary, religion asseverates and maintains that man is immoral, sinful and conceived in iniquity. It offers us Heaven for disciplining ourselves as best we can. This is a stupendous reward for a stupendous task.

Digitized by Google

Public Opinion garbles these facts and pretends that morality is an instinct. Public Opinion could not get us into Heaven on such presumption, and frankly does not claim to do so. But it can take us into good society, which is more than religion, patriotism, morality and art can do. Most of us are not deceived by the statement that chastity, in man or woman, is an instinct, or we should not throw rice after the happy pair going on their honeymoon, as they say in public.

Howsoever, he who not only makes a pretence of virtue but asserts that human traits are virtuous, is an idealist; that is, a liar. Most likely he is not the idealist that he seems. He fears to be otherwise. He may love his wife, yet would not dare to walk hand in hand with her through the streets of Public Opinion.

The Sucker Who Tells the Truth

The truth must not be lost altogether.

As stated previously, the main traits of the sucker are simplicity and wickedness. Now we have a sucker that is all simplicity, which includes truth. We have a fondness for him, as he has a pure soul and no avarice—viewed in the abstract. It requires dignity and repression to tell the shooting of a lion without dilating on unnecessary details. A man who has caught any wild thing is apt to annoy other persons with excessive description. Likewise, a man who has captured the Truth is very prone to make his listeners nervous with the horrible story. And he would hardly be included in this book, but that, having no

Digitized by Google

guile, he serves to illustrate one of the sucker's elements in its raw state, or native crudeness.

It is to be noted that when young we are admonished of the beauty and policy of truth-telling. There seems to go with the advice an intimation that everything which can be told of is beautiful. The youngster follows these instructions almost to maturity. Then suddenly he beholds a blue light. He thought he had come to a high place, but finds it to be the bottomless pit upside down. So he formulates new relations between this and that. Here and there some fanatic is not to be fooled that way. He feels that he is auriferous with truth. He bestows truth as a savage gives away his unvalued gold. He continues verily to the end; and if there be such a thing as the bitter end, there is to be found the sucker who tells the truth.

Few persons have any notion of the amount of falsehood humanity consumes in twenty-four hours. If one lie be theoretically put down as a pennyweight, it would be safe to say that we consume more falsehood than bread. Cheap as falsehood is, the supply is always equal to the demand.

Not many persons tell the truth when they have time to think of something else. Not many wish to be told the truth if it conflict with their vanity or jostle against something already blessed with their approval. Withal, there does arise, in one community or another, the man who, not content with thinking for himself, imagines that his audience wishes to know what he thinks. He is not always to be blamed; for occasionally he is asked a direct question and infers that the questioner desires the result of his reasoning powers.

If a woman with a strange new hat should ask this sucker his opinion of it, he scrutinizes it, while she,

Digitized by Google

poor wretch, fondly trusts he is holding back in order to let his admiration burst with greater fury. Then he will abuse the girl's faith by venting his sincere criticism. "Do you think I am vain?" she inquires, after he has dubiously explained how his comprehension of the hat might be consistent with its excellence in the mind of some one else. He replies that, of course, she, like every other normal person, possesses at least some vanity. She pouts. He rejoins to the effect that vanity is not reprehensible; that it is necessary to human progress. The sucker is under the delusion that he was called upon to think, while it was merely intended of him to say, In proportion with your superlative charms, your vanity is practically nothing; in fact, my dear girl, it is folly in you not to possess a thousand times more vanity than you do.

This sucker tells a woman her age to gain credit for perspicacity. Perspicacity! This word and sucker were made for each other.

Be it not understood that women are the only ones that are dumbfounded at truths. As illustrations, one prefers to use women for the picturesque effect. If bones were vanity, man would not be any shorter than woman, and might still have a bone that she has not: that extra rib.

Let a man quarrel with another and bring his plaint to a friend. "Now tell me, who was wrong, he or I?" "Well," answers the sucker, "it seems to me that you both acted hastily in the matter. Of course he was wrong to be angry; nevertheless you might have withheld that first remark of yours."

Without giving further examples, it can be seen that from the flapjacks of breakfast through the turmoil of day to the goodnight kiss, a man should be

Digitized by Google

on his guard and not taint the innocence of this life with his own scoundrel private opinions. He should award the highest praise to every vanity that kneels before him; and there is where art displays itself: to be so versatile and give praise in such varied phrase to all that one person's will not conflict with anothers in the event of a comparison. This is one argument, and not a bad one, against practical polygamy. It would either convict the husband of duplicity (rather multiplicity) or it would make women dull and commonplace.

Flattery? Has any one ever proved the existence of a flatterer. Truth to say, the world is underestimated and misunderstood. It is much better than most people deem. There is a mistake between the acts and the heart of mankind. In its acts, mankind is too often played for a sucker. At heart, and in its mind, it is good and great.

The Sucker Who Takes Advice on a Certain Important Question

There comes to every man a mood when he asks himself whether or not a lifetime can be passed agreeably with one woman. Is marriage compatible with two apparently compatible persons? Are man and woman adjustible for a lifelong intimacy. Do they not get along best before they understand each other and while they are associating under false pretences?

How many times between the years of twenty and thirty will a man and woman cling together for dear life and separate six months afterards? Suppose the two had married. Horrible to contemplate with the

Digitized by Google

latest charmer on his knee. The average person has from one to two love affairs, of more or less intensity, a year until marriage. The marriage is the result of a no more cautious emotion than the others. In truth, most men consider it unsportsmanlike to use judgment in affairs of the heart.

Many people wish to know why this is, and there are many writers on the subject. Day after day, in all publications that dabble in philosophy, are essays and editorials telling why marriage is not just what it is smacked up to be by the kissers, and how it ends in what it is cracked up to be by the joke-writers. Most of the essayists are women and have quite an air of authority. The stamp of the female viewpoint fresh from the matrix of wisdom is frequently convincing, although the delivery of the opinion oft seems to be accompanied by a vexed stamp of the foot, as if the lady is castegating the antics of somebody she knows. Some of the writers are men. They are more jocular.

The blame for tousled matrimony is imputed to poorly trained men and silly women. Thus it seems that the men are culprits in most cases. A few daring writers have come forward to say that the men and women are all right, but that the matrimony itself is at fault. That is the trend of criticism in all disagreeable matters. When a burglary is committed, there are some critics who lay the odium on the burglar; others blame the rich man for possessing that which can be burglarized; and still others condemn the prison into which the burglar is put. Be that as it may, marriage is not a burglary, even though some wisdom-whackers of the darling sex gyrate on the contention that a man does ruthlessly enter a girl's home and carry her off to a dingy domicile in order to

Digitized by Google

make her unhappy. The women who write thus are in earnest, or the policy of the paper is; which is the same thing. A newspaper's policy is as good as a woman's opinion in most instances. However, the point is that the girl readers keep a scrap-book of these dorothy editorials, become disciples of the writers, and when the girls marry they want a sucker to conform to that scrap-book.

The idea expressed by these philosophers with the nude bosom vignette at the top of their columns is that a man should study his wife's moods. When she is in a snappish mood, he should be careful not to snap back, or she will become snappier; when she is in a mood for pleasure, he should refrain from being tired after his day's work. There are many things in woman uncomprehended by man; when they take a violent form, he should become a sort of poultice to her. For all practical purposes, this is as good as understanding her. If he take her rampages for realities, he is an ass first and a nondescript brute later. When she is incomprehensible, she is merely giving him an opportunity to show that he understands her. If he let her anger make him angry, he is a failure as husband, and might as well figure out the alimony then and there.

Here is an idea that might be playfully inserted into this low-neck philosophy: are not the writers thereof responsible for much of the mischief? A woman who follows these bed-critics can hardly fail to contract a full-blown case of hysterics. There are women who seldom look upon themselves as persons; they are always women. They hold their rights in their hand, as a handkerchief; and there is no reason why they should not when the world is full of suckers.

Digitized by Google

Perhaps in prehistoric times, at any rate before the Flood, or (to use an epoch of our own country) before the War, and, (as they reckon time in San Francisco) before the Fire, man and woman were sinning. The same causes, whatever they were, still exist. Taking into consideration the printability, or unprintability, of certain words in the public prints, also the fact that these writers are paid by the week and write year after year, it is plain why they do not answer the question in a few words, and how the subject took on a lengthy and overshadowing disorder with purple hazes pierced by golden spires and woven with threads of scarlet, which we are assured by authors is the appearance of dusk. Howbeit, from the stagnant pools of truth, and the phosphorescent obscurity above, emerges a young thinking lady startled into all wisdom by the first flash of red, bearing on her arm the strawberry mark of true greatness, that establishes her as the long-lost daughter of the Muse, and proceeds to argue the question again. She says it is "the little things" of life that go to make or mar it.

Why the little things? Or, to be exact, what is the big thing?

A multitude of voices in controversy will cause a man to forget the facts of the case. Were it not for an occasional bath and a love affair, men might even forget that the human body is not the fashionable confection seen in the streets. It is, perhaps, not prudery, but a desire to babble continuously for a monetary consideration, that makes so many virtuous ladies on the editor's staff evade the vital point in their printed matter. Ignorance and undue zeal and the expected pique of their friends may also have something to do with it.

Digitized by Google

The truth is simply this: that which causes marriage also uncauses it. It leaps to it and then it leaps away. Desire. On the first occasion, it is called love; on the second, temptation. It pairs and then it makes irreparable. Infidelity known or suspected is at the beginning of all matrimonial hardship.

Man has more liberty than woman, and is therefore caught and blamed oftener. He errs in companionship with a fair unknown. He associates with his fellowkind in the happy part of a daredevil. A woman meets her friends under a presumption of innocence. Technically she is the superior being. And it is this presumed virtue, together with her phase of enduring or escaping offspring, that makes her the object of man's courtesy.

With the advent of the sucker into modern life, this courtesy took on innumerable variations. Some of these assume that a man should understand a woman in all her gradations of mood. As a result these gradations have all the hues of a large box of assorted pastels, with some ultra-violet moods that the lady herself does not understand. So that when she wails and weeps and goes into a disheveled psychology, the idea is not to glare at her like a monster overhanging a sunlit cliff, but utter such beautiful sentiments that she will be led to repeat the performance another day. When she goes into voluptuous convulsions at finding one of her own unrecognized hairs on his coat, he should not stand aghast, but repeat a love-scene of his early courtship, until she recovers and is strong enough to accept the price of a new hat. When, on the other hand, he wonders how she came by those scratches on her wrists, he should not ask questions, but make a witty remark on some irrelevant matter.

Only the gentleman will do this; a common fellow refuses to view woman as a delicate mechanism that

Digitized by Google

must be used in a certain way or it will go to pieces. The manner of the noble sucker is, though, a disparagement to woman; for he takes her as a creature without responsibility. He allows her to speak disrespectfully to him, and interprets her words as meaningless. He treats her as a baby. Tell a woman she is a goddess and use her intellectually as an infant; no plan could be more tactful.

Loving a woman is segregating her from the others of her sex. She acquiesces in this, and lets the lover know she considers herself different. The majority of women, like the majority of everything, are alike. Yet every woman insists on being not only among the exalted majority but the very paragon of those few; she wishes to be told this often and again. This is what is called wooing the wife. For it is the dictum of the dorothy journalists that a man should not cease wooing a woman after marrying her. So the sucker's work is laid out for him. The cynic may say that a woman who would not consider herself won, after courtship, but is to be won over again every day of married life, must not know her own mind and should not have married at all. How insignificant! It is not necessary that wives be settled in their own minds that they are wives. They should be petted into the belief every day by man, who has the larger mind, and the better memory for those details.

The fault of some men is that they try to adapt common sense to matrimony, contrary to the promise they made during courtship. A common sense and unsuckerly sort of view would judge that a sweetheart is a sweetheart and a wife a wife, and that the lady should understand he did not mean, could not have meant, all that tomfoolery he whispered among the sofa pillows. Some reaction from the high-gusted phrases is inevitable. To keep love at its romantic

Digitized by Google

height is a feat that no woman has the unremitting splendor to do. Yet it is said that simulation of such torrid continuance is correct in man. So the sucker proceeds in hope of gaining praise for this, and he ends at a loss and in chagrin.

Women are somewhat alike and are married on that assumption. Cuddling each one into the belief that she is the arch-queen of her sex only makes her crave the privileges thereof. What a man really desires is a woman, not an arch-queen. If she were that, he would relate the fact to other women. But such a sucker is rare indeed.

A woman cannot be judged by a man until she unfolds herself unto him in love. He does not behold her thoroughly until she has quarreled with him. He understands her best before he meets her. And if he will estimate her by the latter process, that is, by previous women, he will not, on meeting and marrying her, be disappointed.

Reformers and Their Followers

There must be reformers to remind us of the old glories and to ease our burden of inevitable sin.

An oddity about reformation is that it is bound to make a sucker of somebody, either the reformer or the reformer, whoever pays for it. In the tug-of-war between Reformation and Progress, the wag who cuts the rope gets the most applause. The reformer's confidence in himself is the next item of interest. When one has agreed with himself what ought to be done, the next thing seemingly is to get others to do it. If they are reasonable creatures, they will do it soon. That is the fascination about Socialism: it seems possible. A seeming possibility is the most alluring and

Digitized by Google

elusive thing in the world. Absolute impossibilities, such as making a round earth of a flat one, seizing the thunderbolts from Jove, using the ethereal silence as a conductor of sound, seeing through solid flesh, are more profitable. To keep at the illustration of Socialism, it is an ideal, and, needs to say, a pretty one. But, as there never was one ideal man, and as there never was one practical Socialist, it is difficult to see how a large population would ever exercise the ideal steadfastly together. When you behold the increasing number of Socialists, you may ask, Why not? As when you observe the increasing number of millionaires, you may ask, Why?

It is this ideal in our natures that makes a sucker of the Unpaid Reformer. There are some ideas and ideals that you think you can get rid of, but cannot. They scamper off like a kicked cur, and then sit down and blink at you lovingly from the distance.

There are three kinds of reformers: those that reform for money; those that reform for love; and those whose long, flexible, pernicious noses enter slickly into other persons' private affairs.

Of the first we have little to say; they are not relevant here. They do not come under the title of this volume. They convert their impractibilities into cash, are jolly fellows with fine wines and good cigars and make suckers out of anybody that will contribute to their cause.

We can surmise why a man who sells a wholesome substitute for a popular evil would like to have the evil eradicated. And we can discern why a church wages its warning against divorce, for divorced people are not good advertisements of the blessings administered in the first place. Both the above are what might be termed Paid Reformers, and are not suckers. Regarding the curious tail-smeller who would like to

Digitized by Google

see the world pure, stiff and unhappy, it is hard to say which is the greatest sucker, himself or his tolerator.

The chucklehead sometimes known as the dress reformer is usually unpaid. He seldom has a substitute to sell. Say that he stays up late at night meditating about the corset . In his eyes, the corset is about as evil as divorce. He wishes to see women stripped of their corsets, and very likely would be glad to perform the act himself. But while he would do away with these mainstays of the female unreform divine, Progress laces them more tightly, which enrages the man of simple habits. He descants upon the corseted woman as an indecent exposition of loveliness.

The philosophy of the thing is always appropriate. For some profound reason, the protuberances of the human body are deemed unbespeakable in proper discourse, while the depressions, or slender parts, and the joints, come under no such ban. For instance, a woman will quite frankly refer to her ankle; hardly ever to the calf above it. The knee again is also frequently and sincerely referred to. A woman will speak of her neck, but not of her bosom; of her waist, but not of her hips; and so forth and so on. The poet himself never mentions a woman's nose, the most prominent part of her face. One readily sees the lines along which the dress reformer is working. The corset brings out these protuberances, making them unduly conspicuous, so that people are prone to notice them and use them in conversation, unexpectedly.

Never in the history of the world were women as beautifully appareled as they are now. And it may be said of the dress reformer (judging him by his unprepossessing exterior) that had he not gazed too curiously into the windows of her underwear shops, he would never know how it was done; never would have suspected that reform is necessary. As he works

Digitized by Google

from sheer malice, he is a nondescript in this chapter.

Our interest is directed upon that sucker, the Unpaid Reformer, who graciously and gratuitously offers to hurl back the course of evolution. He essays not the easy task of whipping mankind along its progressive paths, but boldly steps before a runaway, maddened custom, and cries, Whoa—stop! He has an ancient and honorable ideal. His predecessors have failed. For thousands of years they toiled at its seeming possibility, always feeling success at hand, and he desires to put this visionary success into full force and effect immediately. An ideal is that which might exist if other things would not, and which could not if they didn't. This is not plain, but is a sufficient description of an ideal, which is not a definite thing anyway.

Suppose that a botanist should desire to make a larger and showier blossom of a wild daisy; not that there is anything in the nature of the daisy to suggest a change, but the botanist inbreeds it to realize his ideal; that is, he creates a novelty in a garden by destroying something that grew otherwise in the wild. The same trick might be performed with man and woman, if they could be kept in a garden. God failed at this; but perhaps the modern reformer has better material to his use.

There is some difficulty in analyzing the Unpaid Reformer, because there is no telling when some society or business man will take him up and pay him a salary as a lecturer or as an officer in a corporation that sells his ideas to suckers. And there are any number of celebrities that are expected to uncork a little reform every now and then to please their congregations and constituents and admirers. Moreover, when a public man makes a statement for publication, he is afraid to say, Let the people do what they wish.

Digitized by Google

The people would not like it. They would rather be forbidden their pleasure and then do it.

So, then, if the reformer make his living, or adds to his livelihood, by his doctrine, he is not a sucker. His followers are.

Respectively he urges us to abstain from intoxicating drink, to refrain from tobacco, to eschew profane words from our vocabulary, to eliminate certain innocent letters from the spelling of other words, to disdain seductive women, to forbear the use of opiates, to renounce wagers on the efforts of horses in race and on the eccentricities of a set of dice and our skill at cards, to look away from divorce as a remedy for matrimonial contests, to prevent war, to be kind to the common people, to expunge millionaires, to avoid bribery, to exterminate amorous literature, to extirpate luxury, to averuncate Sunday baseball, to suppress prize-fights, to cease gossiping, to quit hugging in the dance, to beautify cities, to keep farmers on their farms, to—to—to—to the Devil with him! There are on his mind a number of other matters, which, if carried out, would make this world a Paradise and we would not have to die in order to get to Heaven. Then the question remains, Are we unhappy because we do not relinquish these evils or because we cannot get enough of them?

Should we follow the reformer's advice, and not spend our income on these things, the millionaires would get all the money that we now waste on ourselves.

Now, there may be those who do not believe the stories of Adam and Eve. But nobody doubts that, given Adam and Eve and the apple tree and the forbiddance to eat, what would happen would be exactly what is related did happen. One thing in the world that two persons should not do, and they did. Nowadays there

Digitized by Google

are thousands of things that we should not do, and millions of people to do them. The sincere reformer may be an innocent sucker (if unpaid) and yet it is incredible that he be honest, for he is either trying to make millions of people do what he cannot do himself, or he desires the world to conform to his own personal defects and idiosyncracies. He who would have us vegetariains because he is, omits the three most important points: that he is the product of a race that might be monkeys were it not for meat-eating; that we wish to give posterity the same benefits we received; that we regale ourselves contentedly on roast beef. The advantage of drinking whiskey is not so apparent; yet it must be there, for it is a part of our racial education. Belief in it must remain a matter of faith.

The reformer that would have the whole world as brothers could never have had a brother himself. Those folks that have had real blood-brothers naturally prefer friends. The ordinary brother breaks his father's heart, disappears and comes back to break the will. He makes a better down-trodden member of the masses than a brother.

The reformer does not recognize the fact that people are as hypocritical as he is. They have certain ideals and certain working principles. The ideals may be read in books; the working principles are whatever you see with all your faculties of observation. Whatever has been will be, in itself and as part of all that has existed with it. And even such a trivial matter as gambling could not be destroyed without demolishing humanity. The far past was not as pure as reformers would have us believe. Attention should rather be given to the complicated surroundings that are ours now than the natural life which is erroneously accredited to the simple-machined but not sim-

Digitized by Google

ple-moraled people of ancient times. Why go back to rock the empty cradle of the human race, whose bloody infant still stinks in the darkness of history?

One of the most delightful of games is Leaping at Conclusions. That is, from the standpoint of a spectator. The idea is to select your conclusion; then leap. The fine point of the game is to perform with that utter abandon that comes from long experience at self-deception. The beginner may practice by standing with his back to the sun, and is then to jump over his own shadow. By turning half way round during his course through the air, he will find upon alighting on his feet, that his shadow is behind him, proving that he has leapt over it. This done, he should, in order not to expose himself as a sucker, organize a society for the prevention of people who think otherwise, make himself chairman of the executive committee, and he has a salary for life.

To begin a reform of the world, we need not understand it. All that we need understand, a small matter, is Heaven. Keep Heaven in mind and hammer the world into shape accordingly. Beyond this, it is advisable not to hammer the world in a too explosive part of its temperament.

Unpaid reformers of this age are not such suckers as were their brethren of past centuries, and have a much easier time of it. Why, come to think of it, reformers themselves are a degenerate lot when compared with the self-sacrificing spirits of old. Amid far less danger, our reformers are less heroic than those who once antagonized the powerful agents of sin. Formerly, the sinful potentates levied their taxes, banquetted one another and ignored the reformers except to poison or behead them now and then. The wicked ones, some of them clever and brave, passed into fame instead of dying virtuous and forgettable as

Digitized by Google

was their plain duty. Sometimes of old, a great and righteous and resounding protest also passed into history. Today it goes into pictures and paragraphs. As a nation, knowing how to laugh, we can ridicule anything from a saint to a Socialist. Upon failure, the defeated reformer saves his head and goes back to his trade or becomes a Chautauquan, whatever that is.

What is the matter with the world? It has more people, more money, more books, more philosophy, more religion, more of everything (except pure food) than it ever had. The subject in parenthesis might lead one to inquire if food sweetened with corn syrup and preserved with benzoate of soda be not the cause of all our ills. Still there was wickedness and wailing in the world even before the cow had a competitor in the chemist. So we must look elsewhere for the evil ingredient of our natures. There are so many elsewheres that the search is difficult. Modern civilization makes a spectacular haystack in which to conceal Truth's needle. And we have all kinds of searchers, from the plutocrat who says, "To hell with the needle," to the Anarchist that says, "Burn down the haystack."

Should you call this the Age of Gold, the Age of Stocks and Bonds, the Age of Machinery, the Age of Advertising, the Age of Trusts, the Age of Injustice, the Age of Impiety, the Age of Frauds, the Age of Electricity, the Age of Wonders, the Age of Science, the Age of Commercialism, you would doubtless have a large following in any case. It would be interesting to know what the pundit of five hunded years hence will call us. He may incline to one of the phrases above, or another. At that, there may arise another. The country may change. We shall, unless we are perfect, we shall change. Of course, there are wealthy men that say we are already per-

Digitized by Google

fect; perfection of conditions rendered themselves possible. There are even suckers that believe this; and show it with millions of votes.

It may be asserted then, that, while the reformer is a sucker, he is a most valuable one; for he keeps honor alive, while he himself becomes weak in the giblets. Not everybody is capable of being reformed. You might be able to reform a drunkard, for he may have brains; but you cannot reform a sucker, because he becomes angry when you request him to think.

If there ever was a sucker that looks to be just what he is, it is the Unpaid Reformer. He is very sad. At first he was valiant; then he seemed to have torn his hope into little bits and thrown them into the waste-basket. Never trust a reformer that laughs. He can laugh because he is sure that some thousands of paying suckers have faith in him.

The Greatest Sucker of All

The proof of courage is to die laughing.

He is sometimes called the Dead Game Sport. He would say Yes, if a lion challenged; he is afraid to say No to a mouse. He does everything that is asked of him. He is played for a sucker all the time. It is part of his business. One day he is performing the autopsy over a dead sure thing; the next, he requires assistance of the bar-keeper to count his money. He is so generous he is proud of having bought every dream on the market. He is all kinds of a sucker. He is the whole index. He is so imbued with the pride of being a good loser that he makes failure heroic. His victory consists in having survived. He himself,

Digitized by Google

with everything taken from him, is unconquered. After being worsted, he allows anybody (even his swindler) to pat him on the back and tell him to be game. Where other men have been weakened by regret, downed with remorse, shamed by exposure, beaten by a mob, shot by a husband, imprisoned, exiled, executed, he comes forth with a smile, still to go ahead as a Dead Game Sport.

It is the spirit of the thing that keeps the Dead Game Sport going. He admires a man who plays a shrewd game, and he rejoices in the game most of all. Whether he is for the while a good loser or a good spender,he is always an exuberant good fellow.

He is a gambler in all matters, life and death. Heaven and Hell, riches and poverty, love and tragedy. He is the Biped with the Coin, and, when he has lost it, treats the crowd with his last dollar. They wish him good luck, and the wish comes true. Joyfully he plays his friends and strangers for suckers, and they forgive him because he acted without malice and can tell a good story. He always votes for a good fellow; he cares nothing for public economy, in fact, hating economy of all sorts. When cast off by a woman whom he has emblazoned with pleasure, he rips the pathos into ridicule. As a lover he does all that is asked of him down to the dim-twinkling beauty of his last dollar, and then says good-bye like a gentleman. He is an optimist to the very last and final resort, from which he walks gaily home. There is but one thing that arouses his pessimism and that is a bad cigar. He is always on the lookout for happiness, but, unlike others, he sings and laughs on the way. He is subservient to Public Opinion, always accomplishing his purpose in the most expensive and approved style. He would give a beggar his last coin, partly because he does not know how to refuse

Digitized by Google

and partly because somebody might be looking and judge that he knows too well. Occasionally he is sucker enough to tell the truth; usually, though, the others are suckers for taking him seriously.

Now and then he goes on a carouse from glass to glass and becomes so piratically jocund that he is arrested by officers of the peace. They find him suffering from the hallucination that he is a civil war at midnight. He does not appear in the police court next day, for he has given somebody a handful of money with the request, Fix it for me. This is done.

He is also the man who wants to go to Heaven, and, at times, is enthusiastic about it. Most of his heavenward efforts consist of buying tickets for charity bazaars and handing something to the pastor when they meet on the street. Admiring virtue, he is not sure that vice is as bad as reported. He considers Hell's Landlord a devil of a fellow whose blackness is put on with burnt cork. In all, the Dead Game Sort is so artless and childlike and captivating that, like the chief of all breakers of the law, he attracts the most sympathy. So that, when he dies, the solemn priest can do no less than shed a real tear and, calling upon the Great Mediator, moan, O Master, fix it for him.

Something for the Future

The sucker should be improved if possible.

There is a likely class of yearners that oddly enough has not been developed by this money-making epoch. These would-be suckers are all around us, ready for the hand of the promoter.

The facts are these: litigation is an expensive proceeding. Sometimes parties with the most interesting cases have not the means with which to prose-

Digitized by Google

cute their claims. Sometimes the criminal trial of a scapegrace will bankrupt his wealthy family. A divorce-court experience is frequently a large and unmerited expense to the husband and an ordeal upon the nerves of the wife. A glance at the calendars of our courts will find that the litigants represent a large part of the community as regards numbers and wealth and social position.

These litigants are important enough to demand legislation. Court rooms are crowded, and, in some cases, overcrowded with spectators. Why not have passed a law giving the litigants a right to charge a price of admittance to the court room? Thousands of suckers pay from fifty cents to two dollars at the theater to look at a woman that has passed through a notorious divorce. Usually her acting on the stage is not as interesting as it was in the court room. Her play is some weak dramatic chicanery gotten up merely as an excuse to exhibit the fair notorine. None of the audience listen to the drama; they but watch the lady's theatrical graces and grievance in the memory of her recent escapades. These same suckers besieged and invaded the court room, gasping with policemen and bailiffs to get a seat. They would surely pay twenty-five cents or a dollar to enter like ladies and gentlemen. The parties to the suit could divide the proceeds to pay their costs. In a criminal procedure, the state would get its half for the jury. On days of routine, a low price would be asked. When the witness is expected to give scandalous testimony, at leàst a hundred suckers would pay a dollar. Season tickets, entitling the holder to the whole course of trial would be issued at reduced rates.

The plan may have its imperfections. What custom has not? The more celebrated witnesses, such as society leaders, already invested with public inter-

Digitized by Google

est, might take advantage of their position to elaborate upon the cause of divorce and make it as interesting as possible, attracting the largest and most fashionable audience. Some of them might be constrained, in view of the dramatic effect, to intensify the truth even more than at present. Some of the fair plaintiffs, with an unfairness that could readily be blamed upon the press agent, might quadruple the facts and make the defendant as loathesome as possible, to delight the crowd and bring them again next day. Yet why have mercy on suckers?

Notoriety brings out some of the most startling things from that gray conglomeration with flamboyant functions, the human mind. Hero worship is mild when compared with scandal-gazing. Hero worship is wholesome. A hero is exhilerating. But the enthusiasm he causes is far less than the rush to hear a dawling queen of the fashionables narrate the degeneracies of her husband, and weep while he tells of her wickedness. A hero is disappointingly modest, and looks like anybody else. Quite the other way with the heroine of a divorce. She is suddenly drawn from the imperious modesty of her reputation into a flaunting saturnalia of evidence. The very hem of her gown seems to trail from the stifling court-room back into the yellow brilliance of Hell. She speaks, acts, sighs, draws herself up, swoons, thrills, languishes, horrifies, and goes through a performance of the finest technique, that could never be equalled on the stage. Her hands, with diamonds and emeralds duskily gleaming under black silk gloves, move hither and thither like humming-birds. Her phrases come with a breath of lilacs. And the crowd leans eagerly to hear just what did happen at the Seven Mile House.

The court-room is not limited to the morals of the stage. There is no melodramatic subterfuge nor cul-

Digitized by Google

turing of situations by a fourth-rate dramatist. The scene does not end just as the excitement begins. The lawyer's curiosity and his forefinger are cleared for action, and he does not falter until the judge intervenes, and even then curiosity and the forefinger fight for their lives. The lawyer and his client and the crowd want to hear more about it. This is not done on the stage. There there is a commonplace kiss, the curtain drops, and all is over.

As it now is, the scandal-sucker gets the court play free. It is the only performance that he gets for nothing. And why should he?

The Idealist and Reader of Fiction

It may seem hammering the metal too thin with the statement that fiction-reading is related to suckism. And yet, this chapter will prove the relation and more: that romantic literature prepares the way for the frauds of life. The effect of literature on life has never been estimated. It is vast. Let us investigate.

The first question is, Why should a girl on a porch down in Pasadena be interested in what a man at a desk in Penobscot writes about Nobody? The hero never lived; everything that is written of his doings is false. He is an ideal Nobody walking through a hundred thousands words.

The next question is, Why is he ideal? And then, Why should the reader care whether this inexistent hero should rescue or not rescue an inexistent heroine, arrive or not arrive at a scene in time to prevent an inexistent villain from performing a destruction of mere phraseology? Why be interested in the marriage, infidelities and separation of nobodies? It is

Digitized by Google

queer that anybody should pore over Nobody's complications with Nothing.

These questions might be answered precariously as follows: The girl on the porch enjoys following the imagination of the author, in the belief that she is imagining the scenes herself; also, taking them as real, she likes to see things done, without the trouble of doing them; thirdly, she fancies that she herself is the heroine of surpassing beauty, incomparable devotion and transcendent virtue.

This is just what suckers do. They pay for the privilege of imagination. They glorify their own importance for a while, and then lay the fiction aside. It is not truly imagination; it is delusion. Lunacy is neither imagination nor genius. Only when the genius is a delusion do its possessors admit that thin boundary line.

The price and the time given to the book are not much loss. The contagion of the reader's mind with the ideal is a calamity. It sickens his wisdom and infects that of other people.

There is in life altogether too much courtesy towards vice. Crime shelters itself with a certain ideal that mankind is loth to shatter. And this is because literature has fooled us into thinking that the ideal has impregnated a large part of our action. There is altogether too much politeness in literature. Because a hero and heroine enter a scene that calls for sympathy and admiration, the author wishes us to infer that every other act of those two lives are worthy of sympathy and admiration. In the course of time our minds become literary. The words have made an impression on our thought; they have rousted out the real and squatted a fiction. So that men give the world credit for more ideal than is its assessable property; and the tax-collector has a bad time.

Digitized by Google

The ideals remain in the mind and take the place of real memories. When a man wishes to give an opinion he draws unwittingly on these ideals. He acts in an ideal way on rare occasions and certainly with a small proportion of the beast and spirit that he is.

Most men do not think for themselves; for some purposes one is almost inclined to say it were better that there be no thought at all than that the few think for the many. For the many become savage when they discover what they have done.

Now, evolution may be a pretty good theory; yet it does not show how man lost such a useful and ornamental thing (of which when possessing he must have been justly proud) his tail. With innumerable uses for his tail every day, man gets along the best he can without it, while civilization gives its well-dentistried smile of satsfaction. Of all this, the fiction hero knows, or seems to know, nothing. The characters of fiction are not God's characters with knowledge of good and evil. One character is good, and evil is the other. The novel-writer must include the serpent (the villain) in his garden of love; but his Adam and Eve do not bite.

Fiction thus gives us what is given to all suckers, a sentimental delusion; makes the readers believe in their own greatness and purity. Like politics, it soothes the people into an insensibility of their wrongs

On this account, fiction is responsible for most deceptions of the world; for it is the ideals spread by fiction that enable villains to impose upon suckers.

Ask a farmer for information about apples, and he will give the facts of his orchard. Good seasons and bad, growth and failure, effects of wind and rain and pest, and the average expectation per acre. Question a man concerning mankind, and he will not recollect

Digitized by Google

facts, but hearsay and literature. He will become eloquent; take his little ideal-squirter and spray the air with a perfumed phantom of description.

It is the ideal that causes all the dissatisfaction in life. People are tempted by ideal representation and find they are not getting it. They hang on to his falsity and are discontented with their real selves and real fellows. Fraud begins with an ideal; ideals have ended in bloodshed.

When a man goes into politics, or religion, or endeavors to raise a sum of money, his first act is to promulgate a set of ideals nowise related to his project except to attract the necessary number of suckers. The ideal brings him fame and money; he gives the ideals fame. The moment a man desires something, he becomes an orator. Whether he wants to fill a ballot-box, a collection-box, or any other kind of a box, he pleads with the sentiments of fiction. He makes declarations he knows are impossible of carriage. He begins in the ideal; he completes his work in reality, schism, selfishness, quarrels and anger. Heroic ideal abetted the malefactor.

The main characteristic of fiction is that it directs the attention upon two persons who are well grounded in all the laws of morality, propriety and good taste. The author cannot give them individual wisdom, not possessing any himself, or fears to give what he does possess. Sometimes there is an infraction of moral law, but the intimation is that this is the only instance in the person's life. Breaches of propriety and taste are never made into any other than a humorous book, to counterbalance which indiscretions, the character is made rigidly chaste.

Life is made up of meetings and separations; fiction, of separations and meetings. In the latter, the author puts the superb meeting at an opportune place,

Digitized by Google

which is, on an average, about 350 pages from the dye-factory landscape at the beginning of the book. He ends the book when he has taxed the reader's patience and credulity to the utmost.

Let us go further and see how life has little to do with the ideals of fiction except to inspire a swindle or enjoy a sacrifice.

It is admitted that in real life every love affair ends unhappily. The very fact that it always does end constitutes unhappiness. If it escape all other ills, it ends in death. Few novel writers (that is, only the great ones) pursue their heroes unto death. Biographers do this, of course, and the life of Alexander the Great is none the less interesting for the fact that he died.

In life, a man gets all the peace and happiness he can; then loses it through misfortune or death. In fiction, the hero first accumulates all the quarrels and obstacles, clears them and is relegated back to nothingness when he has achieved a happy climax.

Thus fiction, instead of portraying life, reverses it and narrates what is not. Instead of teaching people how an ideal character bears the ills and frauds of the opposite sex, or how the ordinary person rises to a transient ideal, fiction puts all the odium in one place and rewards two honorable parties who do not seem infected with original sin. In fact, most heroes and heroines appear so sexless that we wonder why they marry. The hero is a spurious character; his heroism is not that of a real man. The heroine is a bogus girl, a matter of wordy prevarication on the part of the author.

Life is made up of falsehood; fiction is based upon what would be true were it not for the fact that it is not. The demand for it was created in childhood. Those who still read are still children.

Digitized by Google

A man marries because of a necessity combined with an ideal. It is obvious that he is untrue to his wife because of an ideal only. Instead of selecting a wife with judgment, he leaves her to romance. When the romance is gone from the wife, he is led elsewhere. He is always looking for that ideal. He never concludes that it does not exist, but that it was not where he thought it was.

A man unfaithful to his wife is not misled by carnal indulgence. He has that at home. He is lured by romance and the ideal. He may be introduced to a woman in a parlor and forget her. Meeting her in picturesque circumstances, he is under an illusion. The lack of sordid details in the scene immediately enchant him with the ideals of the book. His living heart enguises itself with a fictitious heroship. He becomes part of an extemporaneous tale, and is lovingly infuriated. He yearns for a love that is ideal and fleshly at once. Upon that, the other part of the world is forgotten. At home, he may have to deceive his wife concerning his absence. That is how it works out. One ideal proves false, and the next has to be concealed with falsehood.

It may be that if all women's legs were the same shape, man would not fall in love as often as he does. He gives a psychological importance to the lines of pulchritude. He sees a certain spirituality in the body-picture as well as in the forehead.

Fiction then is, for the most part, the influential part, a particularizing of ideals. Ideals are, at ordinary times, fiction. The woman that wants a diamond ring, pretends ideality. The priest that wishes to live in idleness pretends ideality. The newspaper that would have a circulation pretends ideality. The reformer that is looking to a salary pretends ideality. The millionaire and the vagabond, the exemplars of

Digitized by Google

every condition meet humanity on an ideal offer that has no force in their daily life; yet they manage to impress a world of suckers already seduced by the ideals of fiction.

The Astonished Sucker

Suckerism is not a circumstantial folly but an active emotion. There is, in the mind of the sucker, a subsidiary trait that keeps him on the alert for duty. This trait makes common things appear wonderful.

Ideas must have momentum, or else they will not go very far. A certain initial impetus sends them through the brains of mankind. This explosion, or sudden burst of recognition, is called astonishment. An invention or event or person or thing, to succeed, must firstly astonish; that is, it knocks all calmness out of people's heads, and then goes on a successful career. For this reason, and in anticipation of great matters, the sucker must be trained to astonishment. When shown an admirable thing, he must go into a sort of pantomime denoting that he is in alarm for the preservation of his senses. This gives animation to everyday life, and keeps alive that enthusiasm which is necessary to one thing and another. Lack of it indicates a low morale.

Every exhibition of merit should be attended with joy. The beauties of Nature should cause an artistic soul to tremble in terror of the superb; a piece of human finesse should set one agog with oh and ah. When an infant is discovered with its first tooth, a casual observer might be moved to remark, Ah yes; this is about the time they get 'em. And yet, that the onlookers themselves have teeth is no excuse for indifference. What should they do? Ejaculate. Be

Digitized by Google

astonished that Nature did not forget this babe (a possibility). Call wildly for others to look. If there be no others about, call anyhow, and thus make astonishment all the more convincing. The parents understand, and feel that they have not had a child for nothing. The production of children is encouraged.

Whether it be an infant with a tooth, an artist with a picture, a singer with a voice, or anybody with anything, the purport is to swoon with celestial wounds, and exclaim, Well I didn't think it was in him. This will not cause the person to feel aggrieved as underestimated. He will comprehend that the tooth or the picture or the voice or the anything is acknowledged to be miraculous, while the dumfoundoons and shock-absorbers had previously considered him as merely human, and are now licking the ambrosias of the divine from their lips.

Of course, it requires energy to go through life thunderstruck; yet this must be done, or most people would feel themselves ordinary and unfit for achievement.

The astonished sucker is amazed at the poetry and marvel of other people's business affairs. He becomes loose-mouthed in the story of another's pleasures. Should he read that a wealthy woman has lost her diamonds, he will not rest until they are found. The news of the day bloats the wonder-bag of his soul. He would never believe that it is partly fiction.

He will attend a baseball game and become scarlet over a pennant he has never seen. He roars for the home team, forgetting that it is a home team in name only. He understands merely that it is to be made noisy, even as he understands that a bronze pot of another century is to be murmured over. If he were told to murmur soulfully at baseball and shout over the bronze pot, he would do so.

Digitized by Google

When a popular book is being discussed, he will collapse into unsphinctered awe over the genius that wrote it.

He delights in the rare and the difficult. Given a single hint that a friend is in need of praise, and he comes up puffing for the third time from the drowning waters of admiration.

This sucker has put a romantic glow over all history. The more incredible a tale the readier was he to give it the astonishment that means belief, even had he to go so far as to testify to its truth. We can gauge ancient heroes by measuring the celebrities of today. When a man or woman is so well known that any bit of news concerning him or her is easily gobbled by the public, what a temptation it is for the celebrity, pining in a week of obscurity, to make a short remark that is sure to grow into a long story before nightfall. Or an obsequious friend enlarges his intimacy with a large tale of the great person. Enemies can deny—through envy; the great person can deny—through modesty. The falsehood goes on. It has caused astonishment, and there is no cessation. The next man is as astonished as the first; more so, perhaps with more cause, for each astonished sucker puts his literary ability into the facts as he gets them, and the end is never in sight.

In short, wherever genuine good will is needed, the astonished suckers are there to give it. They are as necessary to society as music to a dance; as a bass drum to a political parade; and their wonderful exclamations fall in the paths of Progress with the fertilizing thump of a bull signalling its approbation of all Nature on a field of summer fallow.

Digitized by Google

The Sucker to Whom We Owe a Great Responsibility

We are all infants when we talk to an infant. The object is to let him grow up in simplicity.

It was said that a man who tells the truth is a sucker. In dealing with an infant, we cannot be too careful in removing from him his natural tendency to see things as they are. At first he makes many excusable blunders of word and behavior; gradually these, ridiculous and charming though they be, should be corrected.

As the little sucker puts his lips to the mother-breast, he is, in his helplessness and innocence, the only creature in the world of whom no one would take advantage. Helplessness and innocence have not saved older suckers, and we may put it down that the only reason for not taking advantage of a babe, is that he has nothing that people need.

When the mother withdraws her breast from the infant's mouth, and substitutes a black-rubber nipple over a bottle of animal or manufactured milk, then does the little one become a sucker in the more social meaning of the word. With the rubber nipple the tiny, squirming novice takes his position among the institutions of society. Not much harm is done; it is not time. He begins easily, and takes his first delusion and imitation.

As soon as this little fool begins to understand and talk, he should be taught how to exclude the truth from his conversation. Assuming that the parents are suckers and useful members of society, they should point him the perils and evils of thinking for himself, lest he grow up a cynic, a critic and an iconoclast. Living in civilization as we do, the infant's brain

Digitized by Google

should not be allowed to develop wilfully as that of a savage. Heredity is strong, yet environment should nurse the young mind as early as possible. The child belongs to the epoch in which he lives. The epoch protects him, and, in return, has the right to his services. His mind should be filled with its principles, so that at boyhood the young soul be converted and colored with all the enthralling dreams and ghosts of popular belief. These being at the very making of him, he will hardly be able to subdue them later. If he should free himself, he is one in a generation; and so much the better, for it is more creditable to free oneself than be born free. The majority of children can never grow to achieve distinction. They must be workers. To fill them with ambition would be only to sadden their lives. Rightly are they instructed with so many deceptions that the only thing of which they are not ashamed is the ideal, or that which they are not.

Civilization considers it ill that a man take pride in what he actually is. If he be ruggedly and natively proud, he would not take part in the devotions of his kind, but have only his innate love of mystery as a motive for aspiring to something better.

Howbeit, the infant with his nursing-bottle, symbolically performing the mental mischance that is to characterize him through life, sucks the milk of his first deception. If an angel should whisper to him then, what would be the tale? What wisdom would the infant have to relate unto his elders? What startling and uncalled-for truths then out of the mouths of babes and suckers! The tale would need expurgation, no doubt.

The thought is suggestive. It leads one into the subject of propriety. The upshot of which is that the first thing a child must be taught is to be ashamed of

Digitized by Google

UNIV. OF

himself. Untaught to that extent, he would not be tolerated anywhere. Parents are usually much concerned as to just how much they should inform a child of his person and the natural causes of his being alive.

It must not be supposed that a child does not know what he is, nor what he is to expect in after years. But it is a fact that he gets two contrary ideas: from his playmates, distorted and ignorant rumors of pleasure; from his instructors, restriction. These confuse him. He sees no pleasure in restriction, and he does behind his parents' backs what Adam and Eve, poor children without knowledge of ethics, did when God was out of their sight.

It would be an awful subterfuge upon a child to waylay his curiosity by opening all the bureaus of information to his inquiring mind. He would then have nothing to vex him in his quest of primitive science. There would be nothing to restrict him beside a respect for the rights of others; which would keep his bit of humanity quite alert morally. Eve and Bluebeard's wife were in the same predicament as this child; one touch upon their curiosity, and both required a Saviour. The child's curiosity, perhaps the strongest of his faculties, is liable to wander near the same pitfall. In this hole there is seemingly something that he should not see. If it were provided with a stairs instead of a snare, he would walk down and not fall. If this were done, perhaps instead of expurgating the classics, we should have cause to expurgate only the Penal Code.

Such a course would be a loss to the world. For, assuming that there would be less crime if the child were not predisposed to it by the taunts to his curiosity, much of the mysteries of love would be gone. It is necessary to the exquisite adventures of love that

Digitized by Google

mystery surround it. If all should be, from childhood, plain as eating carrots, and nothing improper in conversation, there would be no beautiful haze over carnal fact, no poetic illusion in language, no twinkling magic in a lover's night.

An Ordinary Day in the Life of a Sucker

The majority own the world; that is why they pay rent. The voice of the people, which is said to be the voice of God, is raised in everlasting protest. When property is taken away from a man by superior force, he is still a man; when it is taken away by argument he is a sucker. One could give good argument why the people who live on this earth should not each have a section of it. The best point is that, should each individual be given a share of earth, and be selfish enough to take it, the prosperity of the united system would suffer.

When the sucker awakes in the morning, he is one day nearer the payment of rent. He lives on land owned by somebody else. If the landlord had not been allowed to acquire more property than was necessary for his home and business, it could have been divided among the suckers. But, while this would have benefited the sucker, it would have made the cities larger and inconvenient and less sightly. For each sucker would have built a small house to suit his own needs. A large city must be compact; hence the land-holders build tenements. A large city must be in the hands of the rich.

The poor cannot benefit their country except by the

Digitized by Google

surrender of their rights. The poor cannot collaborate to advantage. For instance, in order to develop a country, five men can construct a railroad; a thousand men could not. Five men have more executive ability than a thousand. Ten million men have no executiveness at all. The suckers then could not lay a railroad. They can only perform the hard work and pay the fare. They develop the country. Why they do so, or why the country should be developed, is not a subject for discussion here. The virtue of it was assumed at the outset herein. At any rate, the sucker is the only patriot. He loves his country, because he gives his all to it. But his country does not love him. Nobody loves a sucker in his official capacity.

Truth to say, money and land do not bring happiness to a country any more than to a person. The larger a country, the more is the patriotism divided. Sometimes the sucker who pays a large rent for a pygmy's home in a tenement can hardly enjoy having contributed to the support of a railroad, when an elevator would be more to his purpose.

When the sucker has washed himself in the morning, he sits to a breakfast of impure food. Dwelling in a city, he cannot have all his food fresh from the markets, but buys things that are grown at such a progressive distance that they must come to him in cans and packages, as not to become stale. It is sweetened with by-products and preserved with chemicals. Occasionally the sucker, angered at these adulterants in his necessaries, attempts a clearing. Rather, some well-meaning official attempts for him. A law is passed that packages of food be labeled with their every ingredient. The manufacturers are puzzled for a while, until they recall the sucker's characteristics. They need not better their product; they merely

Digitized by Google

change the labels in conformity with the law, printing the names of the chemicals in the food. The sucker buys the medicated goods with the amusing labels. He has not the courage to refuse.

All the sucker's food, clothing and articles of daily use are extensively advertised. The impression seems to be that unless his food be advertised, the sucker would not eat. He pays millions of dollars annually to be induced to partake of the necessaries of life.

After breakfast, the sucker rides downtown in a street car. He cannot afford to live near his place of business. He gave the street to a corporation, being unable to operate the railway himself, not having the brains nor the money. The corporation got the money from him, and tells him he has not the brains. So the sucker keeps his hands off.

It is generally said that the sucker works with either brain or brawn. Not entirely. He works with his soul. If he is a laborer, he is inwardly cursing his job most of the time; and most of his accompanying speech is a disgruntled comment on what he is doing. Laborer or clerk, he is dreaming of happiness; he tosses up tempting visions with every spade or penful. Some do not. They have been hypnotized into the belief that their minds must be intent on the work, and that appreciation will then follow. These men can hardly be called suckers of a long deceit; they are sword-swallowers. During the day they will not converse with their fellow-workman. The proprietor of their establishment frowns on such friendliness. His employees are there for business not friendship. So the weak-souled clerk drudges through the day, talking only on business, fearful of being caught with a congenial word on his lips or a smile on his busy features. He is stimulated with the pre-

Digitized by Google

cept that energy and attention will bring their reward. He hopes for promotion.

These men are playing the most terrific game that ever was: the tragedy of numbers. The hero of a tragedy usually dies fighting; and so here. One man in a community may succeed by industry and merit. Fancy the confusion of a million endeavoring to get near the top on that basis, or any basis. Whatever the chances of success held out by the preachers, it cannot apply to all. One succeeds because the others did not follow the advice, or were unable to keep up the follow. The high places are for a few; the low places must become more populous all the time. That is the tragedy of numbers.

The adviser states that the chances for success are greater now than ever; that is, the filling in of the industries enlarges the accomodations. The clerks are advised to be honest, methodical, and to have their employer's interest at heart. Let us see. Suppose a corporation employ a thousand men, honest, methodical and interested. The corporation cannot prefer and reward them all; yet it does not harm the corporation to have them all trying for the reward and preference.

Theoretically, every individual ought to try; but theoretically a large majority ought not try, for success to it impossible.

A thousand people could support themselves by working four hours a day, and have many holidays. It is ambition's promise of more than a natural emolument that steadies them to work for nine hours. With everybody working for more than an ordinary livelihood, and many getting less, there must be an awful gulf of misery and a crush in some part of the system But not one of them could be persuaded that he is not destined to be one of the crushers.

Digitized by Google

Some writers mention class distinctions; and recently there has been a widespread assumption that the millionaire is less honest than the workingman. This is error. If the workingman were not dishonest, the millionaires could not be. Millionaires are the outcome of dishonest conditions, which arise from dishonest humanity. The workman who can talk sincerely to himself will gaze at his oppressor and say, There, but for the grace of something I could not help, goes myself. I am that man in the mansion. If I were he and he were I, the angels could see no difference.

The workingman must work; but why more than is necessary for his family's food and shelter? He is already a sucker to that extent—a hard-working sucker paying off the romantic debt of his youth. But why must he earn even more than he is paid? It is because he hopes to be paid at some time more than he shall earn. It is his hope to get something for nothing, eventually, that makes him now give his all—body, brain and soul. He is not a sucker individually for trying; as part of the inevitable aggregate failure, he is a sucker. There is no way out of it; the majority cannot free themselves from the tragedy of numbers. And were it not for religion, that promises better times beyond the tomb, the case of the majority would be sad indeed. And the more intelligent it might become, the sadder would be the tragedy of its life.

A philosopher might be content to work hard, selling his philosophy, or doing something equally honorable, yet would dislike being ordered about by a speculator who calls himself an aristocrat because he adds money with his brain. The great consideration, then, is freedom. This the majority of men can never have. And the less they are able to appreciate freedom, the better for their souls.

Digitized by Google

But what is an ordinary day in the life of a wealthy sucker himself? He has freedom. It means nothing to him. Freedom is nothing; lack of it, as lack of air, is unpleasant. People continuously in fresh air and freedom do not pay much attention to it.

The rich man has many many times one livelihood. Unfortunately, he can use only one. Or say that he may overeat himself and use somewhat more than one livelihood. All the rest becomes a game. Clothes, carriages, houses, pictures, jewels, fortune. They are nothing more than an exciting game, the excitement of much of it being lost after the things are won. He can be in but one place at a time; the one place becomes tiresome. And then change becomes tiresome. He has nothing but the game of his fortune; and as there are many as fortunate as he, and more, he is playing a losing game most of the time. Those few yearly millions he subtracts from the poor! They do not amount to much. Every day he is disgraced by wealthier men.

This is, of course, not saying that his position is not better than the workingman's. It might be, in some respects and not in others. A man with wife and child and $5000 might take a vacation for a year. A wealthy man would not dare to. He works under the terrible nightmare that the loss of a few million dollars would make him unhappy. But that does not amount of much. The point is that wealth plays everybody for suckers—its owners included. The game of wealth is as disappointing as that of life. No one ever wins.

After his day's work, the sucker eats dinner. Then he may go to the theater and see himself on the stage. In comedy and tragedy he sees himself. In drama he sees what is not. He would rather laugh than behold his tears theatrically illumined. The curtain rises.

Digitized by Google

The audience beholds its multitudinous and incarnate souls intermingling in bright satins and dark attire beyond the footlights. It is the only illusion worth anything. It is a sublime falsehood, a comic nothing, a tragic truth, a melodramatic school for suckers.

The Sucker's Holiday

During what he is pleased to term Sundays and Holidays, the sucker catches his breath, after the exciting week. He sleeps later, eats more, may give presents, and, for a few hours takes on a genial manner, for which he has had no time during the week or months past. Also he atones for his sins.

The superb holiday of the sucker, and most characteristically his own, is the 1st of April, otherwise known as All Fools' Day or April Fool. On this day the sucker, in sportive revenge for the indignities put upon him during the year, tempts his fellows with many pranks. This is a pleasure of the imagination, or a delusion, in which the sucker raises himself to the pomp of a laughing swindler by making others act foolishily. The sucker plays aristocrat as a child plays pirate.

For example, in token and remembrance of the impure food sold him during the year, the sucker buys candy which is filled with cayenne pepper or wood. This he foists upon a friend, and his mouth joculates widely at the ensuing discomfiture. Having done this the sucker has proven to himself that he is not such a fool after all, for he is yet sharp enough to transact a practical joke on others.

On the back of another, he pins a card bearing the words, "Kick me." The reversed applicability of this trick is almost as bad as jesting with death.

Digitized by Google

With another, he makes an apparently losing bet with the proviso, "You will pay if you win." And takes the stakes feeling that he is recompensed for a whole year of financial innocence.

He conceals a brick beneath an old hat on the sidewalk. This is the symbolic farce of a lifetime. The sucker that kicks the hat and stubs his howling toe exemplifies all the details of suckerism: the supercilious approach, the sentiment of doing a heroic act, the greed of achieving an illustrious kick, and then the sudden pain. Observing a person play the sucker to such a snare arouses the latent manhood and jocosity of the bystanders.

At night the trickful sucker relates to his family his acumen of the day, deluding others and himself escaping. "Wasn't fooled once," he says. "Saw all those tricks played years ago, and was on to them." His own exploits he narrates with hilaritiy and egotism, goes to bed happy and giggles in his sleep.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

RETURN TO ⟶ **CIRCULATION DEPARTMENT**
202 Main Library

LOAN PERIOD 1 **HOME USE**	2	3
4	5	6

ALL BOOKS MAY BE RECALLED AFTER 7 DAYS
1-month loans may be renewed by calling 642-3405
6-month loans may be recharged by bringing books to Circulation Desk
Renewals and recharges may be made 4 days prior to due date

DUE AS STAMPED BELOW

INTERLIBRARY LOAN
SEP 05 1991
UNIV. OF CALIF., BERK.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY
FORM NO. DD6, 60m, 12/80 BERKELEY, CA 94720

Digitized by Google

YB 13495

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google